# Briefing Note: Visit to Mangere Refugee Reception Centre

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education</th>
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<td>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</td>
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<td>Date:</td>
<td>16 April 2019</td>
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<td>Security Level:</td>
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<td>Priorities:</td>
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<td>METIS No:</td>
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<td>Drafter:</td>
<td>Maree Jeurissen</td>
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<td>Key Contact:</td>
<td>Maree Jeurissen</td>
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<td>Messaging seen by team:</td>
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<td>Round Robin:</td>
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## Purpose of Report

This Briefing Note provides you with background information and speech notes to support your visit to the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre and the AUT Centre for Refugee Education on 24 April 2019.

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released

**Agree / Disagree**

## Summary

- Currently New Zealand accepts 1000 refugees per year through the Annual Quota Programme. All refugees complete a six week orientation at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (MRRC) before being resettled in a region.

- The Ministry of Education provides a range of support to respond to the needs of refugee background students, their families and communities while at the MRRC, and after when they are settled in their respective communities.

- Your visit to the MRRC coincides with the farewell ceremony for the current intake. Prior to the ceremony you will have an opportunity to visit the early childhood centre, primary and adult classes, and tour the site. The detailed event summary is appended.

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**Susan Howan**  
**Associate Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**

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**Hon Tracey Martin**  
**Associate Minister of Education**

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_/ / 24/4/19_
Background

1. Currently New Zealand accepts 1,000 refugees per year through the Annual Quota Programme. Approximately 400 are children who will need to enrol in early learning services and schools after their six week orientation at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre (MRRC).

2. Refugees spend six weeks at the MRRC to begin their orientation to life in New Zealand.

3. From 1st July 2020 the quota will increase by 500 and we will accept 1500 refugees annually. The Refugee Quota change was agreed to by Cabinet in September 2018.

4. To accommodate the additional refugees, the following work is underway or about to commence at MRRC:
   - extension to the dining room
   - additional accommodation blocks
   - a new Early Childhood Centre
   - three new classroom spaces.

Education orientation at the Refugee Reception Centre

5. Quota refugees are supported through the resettlement stages. This starts during the reception phase at MRRC with an orientation education programme that includes English language and education assessments and preparation for transition to the compulsory school setting. There are approximately 170 refugees in each intake.

6. We have a contract with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) to deliver education programmes for refugees at the Centre.

7. This is a crucial first experience of New Zealand education for refugees. AUT generate assessment reports for both children and adults at the end of the orientation programme. Schools use the assessment information as a starting point in their understanding of the education level of the refugee children they are enrolling.

8. The information also helps schools to be aware of any specific learning issues or additional needs children may have.

Post MRRC school based support

9. Schools are well prepared to welcome former refugees. Culturally responsive schools do the following:
   - recognise significant cultural practices and festivals of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds
   - embrace diversity and recognise its value for the school
   - recognise the role of school as a bridge between cultures
   - provide professional development for teachers to become culturally competent teachers
   - support communications in a range of languages
   - accommodate special requirements such as prayer rooms/times, diet etc.

10. We provide additional support and resources for schools with refugee background students in order to meet the needs of these students. These include:
• ESOL funding for English language acquisition
• Additional support from the Refugee Flexible Funding Pool for academic support such as:
  o Bilingual Liaison Support
  o Homework support programmes
  o NCEA support
  o Intensive Literacy and Numeracy
  o Youth mentoring.

11. The Refugee Pathways and Careers Funding Pool helps former refugee students in secondary schools gain a better understanding of the different career and educational pathways available in New Zealand.

12. Additional components to established careers programmes are necessary to ensure that the needs of former refugee students are being met. These needs include personalised course guidance, leading to appropriate qualification pathways in school and ongoing guidance from careers counsellors. A further additional component involves effective strategies for informing and involving families.

13. Fundamental to the education success of students is having families and communities fully informed and engaged in the education of their children. A key component of our response to the needs of refugee and migrant background students is the provision of information to their families and communities.

14. Our Senior Advisers Refugee and Migrant Education team deliver education workshops for former refugee families in the regions in collaboration with Red Cross. These workshops are a key part of providing families with information on the New Zealand education system and distributing education material translated in various languages.

15. The Computers In Homes programme for families with school aged children targets 130 families nationally. The purpose is to provide opportunities for refugee families to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for learning for all family members (children and parents).

Achievements and challenges for refugee background students

16. Under the Refugee Resettlement Strategy the Ministry has been reporting annually on the achievement of refugee background students in terms of achieving NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification.

17. The proportion of refugee background school leavers gaining NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification after five years or more in the New Zealand education system has continued to rise from a baseline of 68.5% in 2009 to 89.4% in 2017.

18. Former refugee students who have had five years or more in the New Zealand education system achieve NCEA level 2 at a higher rate than Domestic (not ESOL) students.

19. While the NCEA data indicates a good proportion of our refugee background students are achieving well, challenges still remain for some.

20. Some of the challenges impacting on former refugee education achievement include the time it takes to reach English proficiency. It takes 2 – 3 years for students to achieve conversational fluency in English, but 5 – 7 years to gain academic proficiency. Therefore those entering the system with little or no schooling or as an adolescent face
significant challenges. They are likely to require a longer period of English language study before they can meaningfully participate in the labour market or take up further tertiary studies.

21. Generally, refugee background students may have to overcome the following:
   • trauma experienced in refugee camps
   • disrupted education background or no prior schooling in some cases
   • language barriers
   • having to adjust to a different educational system
   • culture shock: fitting into a new culture while maintaining own culture
   • limited resources and academic support from home

Speech Notes

22. There are 170 former refugees in this intake, half of whom are children. They come from Burma, Syria, Colombia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Pakistan, Palestine, and the Sudan.

23. The former refugees in this intake will be resettled in Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Dunedin, Invercargill, and Christchurch.

24. New Zealand has a world class education system and children and families from refugee backgrounds will continue to receive support to ensure their education needs are met.

25. The proportion of refugee background school leavers gaining NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification after five years or more in the New Zealand education system has continued to rise from a baseline of 68.5% in 2009 to 89.4% in 2017.

26. Former refugee students who have had five years or more in the New Zealand education system achieve NCEA level 2 at a higher rate than Domestic (not ESOL) students.

Proactive release

27. It is intended that this Education Report is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex one: Event summary