

17 June 2024

Celebrating 25 years of the NSW Refugee Health Service

The NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS) is marking 25 years of specialised health services for people from refugee backgrounds.

This Refugee Week (16 June – 22 June), RHS is giving health workers a unique look at what it's like to be a refugee with the 'Refugee Camp in My Neighbourhood' experience.

The tours which are run by guides who have a refugee background, lead people through the refugee journey including escape across a border, arriving at a refugee camp, and the resettlement process in Australia.

Cathy Preston-Thomas, Acting Director, NSW Refugee Health Service said the experience aims to educate health staff on the challenges faced by many refugees as they settle here and navigate the healthcare system.

"More than 2,500 refugees settle in south western Sydney every year," Ms Preston-Thomas said.

"We have individuals of all different backgrounds living and working here, and by learning from and supporting one another, we can refine and enhance our services for the benefit of refugees across the state."

"For 25 years the NSW Refugee Health Service has not only provided care directly to people from a refugee background, it has worked with health workers in hospitals and services to help them understand and deliver high-quality, individualised, and trauma-informed care.

"The Refugee Camp in My Neighbourhood experience is an excellent opportunity for health workers to gain insights into the impact of the refugee experience."

Recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers often face a multitude of complex challenges. These can include physical consequences of torture or armed conflict, psychological and adjustment disorders such as anxiety, and limited knowledge of the healthcare system.

RHS provides a range of clinical services and medical assessments for this community and over the last 10 years has supported more than 20,000 refugees and asylum seekers.

The state-wide service also delivers community information sessions on topics including oral health, nutrition, and chronic diseases.

Further information on the NSW Refugee Health Service is available [online](#).