

MEDIA RELEASE

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Real estate agents ‘open doors’ to assist refugee settlement

ACL, the largest provider of high quality English language education in Australia, has recognised real estate agents for their work in assisting the settlement of newly arrived refugees in the community.

At an event in Sydney today (Friday 11 July), ACL Government Programs General Manager Michael Cox said that the current rental market was extremely tight for all people looking for rental accommodation, let alone for those arriving in the country as newly arrived refugees.

“This situation makes life hard for the average renter, and it would be even more difficult for newly arrived refugees without assistance,” Mr Cox said.

“However, ACL and our consortium partner Resolve FM, work very closely with real estate agents who are helping us to successfully settle refugees across the Greater Sydney area,” he told the gathering of real estate agents and consortium partners.

ACL has been assisting refugees’ settlement since 2005 through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), a Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) funded program.

Working with consortium partners, ACL has throughout 2007/2008 assisted more than 3,500 humanitarian entrants through the IHSS.

Mr Cox said the IHSS is designed to assist humanitarian entrants build new lives in Australia by providing them with support to meet their initial settlement needs.

“It is most appropriate that the recent Refugee Week theme of ‘A Place to Call Home’ is reflected in our appreciation of local real estate agents,” he said.

“The aim of this year’s Refugee Week is to encourage Australians to think about the global themes of protection and human rights by focusing on the fundamental right to a secure place to call home.

“For most refugees finding a place to live, along with learning English and finding employment, are major challenges. The IHSS increases tremendously their ability to integrate, participate and contribute to the community.”

In finding rental accommodation for refugees, ACL works with consortium partner Resolve FM, a facility management specialist across Australia and New Zealand.

Resolve FM Contract Manager Garry Hogan said that since 2005, Resolve FM has found housing for thousands of refugees across Sydney. The top five settlement suburbs were Fairfield, Auburn, Liverpool, Blacktown and Lidcombe/Berala.

“On reviewing these clients, we have observed that nearly 30 per cent of all families have settled in two suburbs, more than 50 per cent of all families have settled in five suburbs, and about 80 per cent have settled in 16 suburbs,” Mr Hogan said.

Resolve FM’s service to refugees includes providing temporary accommodation on arrival, tenancy training covering property care, maintenance and resident/neighbours’ rights, and then assistance to find long-term accommodation in the private housing market.

“Working closely with refugees in this situation also allows us to provide a tenancy reference for refugee families, which is crucial for them once they start applying for their own rental property,” Mr Hogan said.

ACL Government Programs General Manager Michael Cox said ACL is looking forward to the continued support of the real estate industry to help with the successful settlement of newly arrived refugees in the community.

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