

Settlement sector resilience: Navigating COVID-19 and beyond

Prepared for SETSCoP



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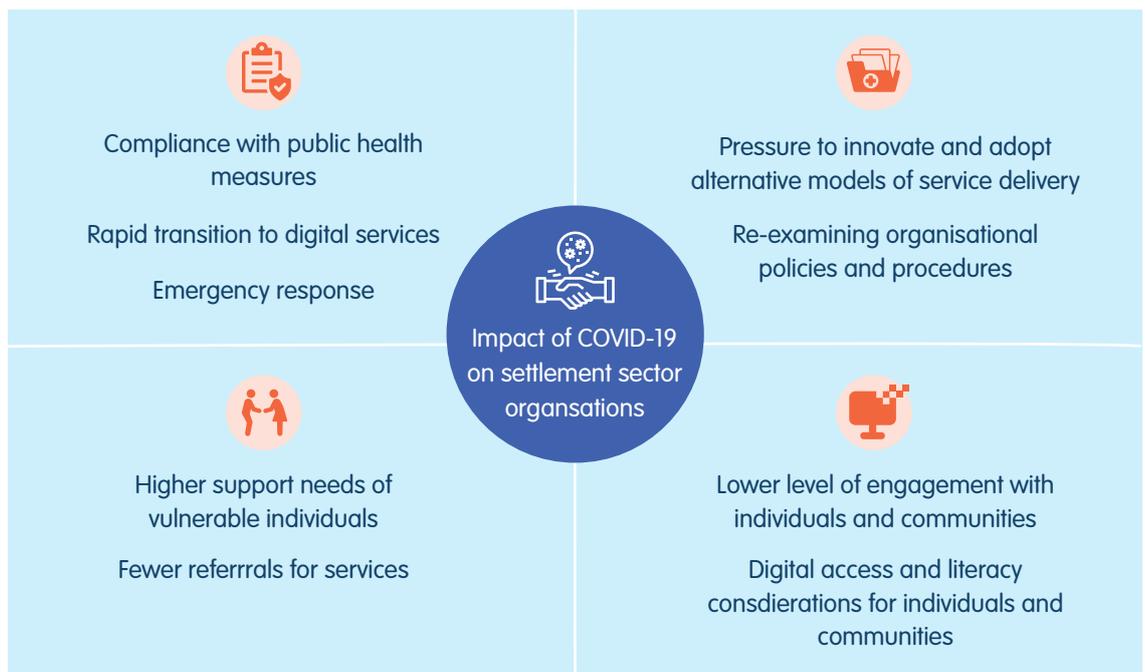
Impact of COVID-19 on settlement services

The COVID-19 pandemic has and will continue to impact the settlement process in Australia. Settlement service providers will manage uncertainty, adapt and evolve, as they continue to support newly arrived vulnerable migrants and refugees. Like the individuals and communities it supports, the settlement sector is resilient and will continue to advance, despite challenges experienced through the pandemic.

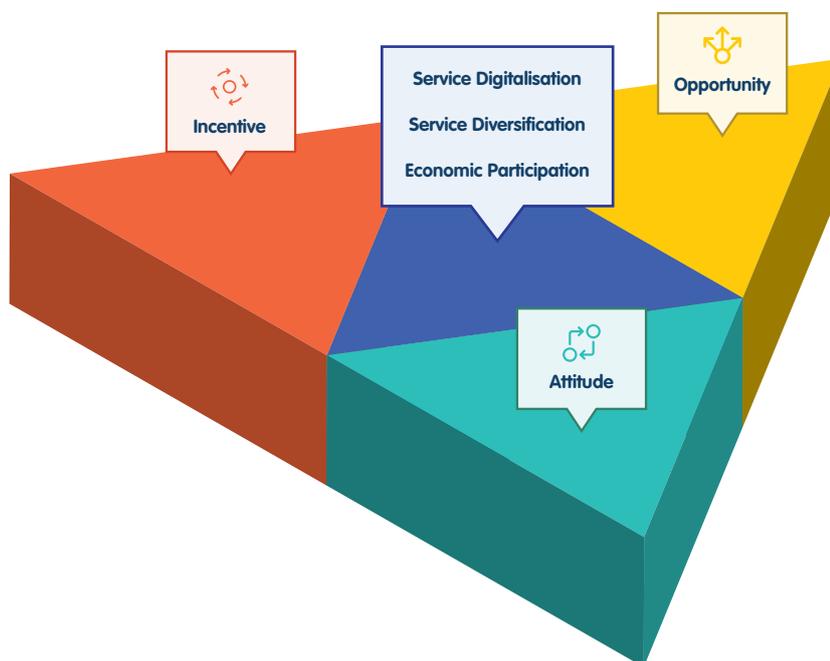
The COVID-19 pandemic has provided the settlement sector an opportunity to reimagine the settlement process, review service delivery models, and strengthen their organisational capability and continuity. Additionally, the pandemic has prompted the development of innovative approaches to better support vulnerable migrants and refugees during this time.

The resilient sector: Turning crisis into opportunity

Despite the challenges arising, the crisis has highlighted a number of opportunities for settlement sector organisations now and into the future. There is a better preparedness by the sector for any future pandemics or health emergencies, and an appreciation for the necessity of settlement services to continue during such times. Additionally, the crisis has led to greater collaboration and sharing among settlement sector organisations and stakeholders, with the focus on successful settlement outcomes for individuals and communities maintained as the priority.



The resilient sector: Turning crisis into opportunity



Key areas of opportunity as the settlement process transitions through COVID-19 and beyond:

- Embracing digitalisation in service delivery
- Pursing diversification of services
- Building capability for enhanced economic participation outcomes

Service Digitalisation

COVID-19 and the associated public health restrictions lead to a greater reliance on digital service delivery by the settlement sector. With technological advances, digital service delivery will continue to evolve and play a significant role in settlement service delivery going forward.

Incentive

- Alternative service delivery and engagement approaches
- Flexibility for staff and individuals supported through services

Opportunity

- Enhancing digital literacy of staff and individuals supported through services
- Connecting with individuals and cohorts who are less engaged e.g. those in rural and remote areas, youth, women with caring responsibilities)

Attitude

- Forward thinking, awareness of technological advances, responsiveness to change
- Focus on empowering individuals supported through services to take more ownership of their own settlement process

Service Diversification

In view of the changes to the migration program, diversification of services provided and related funding streams is a business continuity and growth opportunity for the settlement sector.

Incentive

- De-risking through multiple funding streams and a growth in service portfolio
- Re-examining organisational priorities and critical business functions

Opportunity

- Greater financial security and independence through growth in the range of services offered
- Wider reach to individuals and communities

Attitude

- Embracing change and being proactive and collaborative in the current climate
- Focus on person-centred support of individuals through coordinated, seamless service delivery

Capability for enhanced economic participation outcomes

Economic participation has been a key priority area for settlement services, and COVID-19 has reinforced it even more so. Many individuals supported through settlement services have experienced job losses or are likely to work in industries significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Incentive

- Economic participation as a key contributor to better settlement outcomes overall
- Significant area of need and support required for newly arrived migrants and refugees

Opportunity

- More innovation in developing sustainable solutions and pathways for individuals supported through services
- Fostering greater cross-sector collaboration with employers and industries

Attitude

- Responsiveness to the critical circumstances around significant job losses and struggling industries
- Focus on empowering individuals to enhance their settlement experience through stronger economic participation outcomes

Conclusion

The resilience of the settlement sector is evident. Settlement sector organisations have the opportunity to re-shape aspects of service delivery in order to enhance settlement experience and outcomes for individuals and communities. Redefining crisis as opportunity is also a chance to employ more forward-thinking strategies to strengthen organisational capability and continuity.

The settlement sector plays a key role in promoting community resilience and social cohesion. The existing sector infrastructure is critical to ensuring the long-term success of Australia's integration strategy through connecting Australia's diverse communities to mainstream services and building linkages across cultures.

While settlement services have always balanced individual support with local community coordination, it may be that in the coming years services will pivot further towards functions that build and strengthen local communities.