

The Environmentally Sustainable Settlement Sector:

A 'Greenprint' for the Australian Refugee and Migrant Settlement Sector

June 2025



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The Social Policy Group acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples and the Traditional Custodians and owners of the lands on which we live and work across Australia.

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the Wurundjeri/Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, and the Yagara and Yugambah peoples as the Traditional Custodians and Owners of the land on which our offices are situated. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to the land, waters, and communities.

As an organisation committed to advocating for social cohesion and the well-being of disadvantaged populations nationwide, we acknowledge and celebrate the diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to our country.

We extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia, past, present, and future. We recognise their ongoing resilience, strength, and stewardship of the land and commit ourselves to ongoing efforts of reconciliation, understanding, and collaboration.

LGBTQIA+ Acknowledgement

The Social Policy Group respects everyone's right to freely identify and affirm their sexual or romantic orientation and gender identity, including terms such as lesbian, gay, transgender, non-binary, gender diverse, genderqueer, queer, aromantic, asexual, bisexual, pansexual, sistergirls and brotherboys. We support the rights of people born with intersex variations to be free from discrimination and mistreatment based on their sex characteristics.

We pay our respects to our community's lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer pioneers and acknowledge the lives of those LGBTQIA+ persons who never made it to safety.

As an organisation committed to designing and advocating for inclusive social policy, we celebrate our community's diversity and work to eliminate all forms of discrimination throughout Australia's systems.

Victim Survivor Acknowledgement

The Social Policy Group acknowledges the significant impact of family and domestic violence on individuals, families and communities. We recognise the strength and resilience of the children, young people and adults who have, and are still experiencing this violence and pay our respects to those who did not survive and to their loved ones.

Contents

Acknowledgements ii

About Us iv

Introduction 1

Glossary of Key Terms 3

The Intersection of Climate Change, Migration, and Settlement 4

Global Context: Climate-Induced Migration.....4

Local Impact: Challenges for the Australian Settlement Sector.....4

Current Frameworks and Opportunities 7

Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework.....7

Stakeholder Collaboration and the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework.....9

Australian Settlement and Climate Action Policies10

Global Practices Informing Local Solutions.....11

Pathways for Collaboration and Action 12

1. Embedding Sustainability into Core Practices13

2. Supporting Migrants and Refugees' Participation in the Green Economy.....14

3. Building Climate-Resilient Communities15

4. Strengthening Multi-Sector Collaboration.....16

Next Steps 17

References 19

About Us



The Social Policy Group (SPG) strives to make Australia's policies and systems better serve the diverse people and communities of Australia.

As a trusted partner of government, community leaders, and service providers, and a peak body for settlement and multicultural health, SPG is a recognised leader in best practice and thought leadership across critical areas such as gender equality, economic analysis, access to justice, and community sector capacity building.

The SPG facilitates the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Community of Practice (SETSCoP), which brings together service providers who support refugees and vulnerable migrants to enable sharing and learning, and improve outcomes for people supported through the Australian SETS program and the wider community.

This *Greenprint* for the Australian Refugee and Settlement Sector is a thought leadership and innovation initiative led by SPG in its role as the national peak body for settlement. It is made possible through the support from the Australian Government via funding from the Department of Home Affairs.

© 2025 The Social Policy Group

Introduction

Why think about an environmentally sustainable settlement sector? And why now?

Climate change is accelerating; 2024 was the hottest year on record since 1880.¹ In Australia, the changing climate means longer fire seasons, more frequent floods and harsher storms. These environmental crises affect everyone but they are hardest on the most vulnerable.

Globally, climate-induced displacement is on the rise.² In Australia, the settlement sector works tirelessly to support people uprooted by conflict, disaster, and hardship, as well as those simply seeking a better quality of life. However, the settlement sector has its own environmental impact. And so, while helping those displaced by climate change and other crises, it also contributes, however unintentionally, to the problem.

Let us be clear: agencies doing lifesaving and affirming settlement work are not operating in carbon-intensive ways. But collective responsibility asks something of all of us.

The settlement sector employs thousands of staff, works out of more than 200 office sites, manages vehicle fleets nation-wide, runs expansive settlement activities and events across the country, and meets with tens of thousands of clients every year. The sector can make a difference.

There is real value to be gained if the settlement sector embraces this challenge. Some agencies are already seeing long-term benefits from switching to electric vehicles.³ Cost savings from solar-powered and battery-powered energy sources also promise long-term value for settlement organisations. What could your organisation do with the savings? Hire more staff, expand client programs, invest in training; the possibilities are real and within reach. Investing in local initiatives such as community gardens contributes to emission reduction, provides fresh food, and fosters community connection and resilience.

Investments in disaster response and climate-readiness for the settlement sector are already reducing the impacts of extreme weather events on migrants, refugees, and the sector itself, resulting in cost savings that enhance sector capacity and improve settlement outcomes. There is a great deal of value to be captured here.

1. And it is not just climate change. Australia ranks second in the world for biodiversity loss, has the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world, and is clearing more forest and lands than most other countries in the world. World Meteorological Organization (WMO). <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2024-warmest-year-record-about-155degc-above-pre-industrial-level>

2. “[...] most refugees and internally displaced people also come from highly climate-vulnerable countries where weather shocks or worsening climatic conditions add to the challenges of that make sustained peace and safe return difficult to achieve.” UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/au/climate-change-and-displacement-0>

3. National initiatives such as ARENA's Driving the Nation Program aims to reduce road transport emissions, by supporting Australian businesses to accelerate EV uptakes. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/transport/driving-the-nation-fund>



The sector also has a critical opportunity to connect migrants and refugees with the industries of Australia's green future.

The Australian Government has already committed over AU \$40 billion to decarbonisation and the growth of green industries.⁴ By acting now, the settlement sector can help protect newcomers from the economic fallout of shrinking industries, and ensure they are prepared for jobs in a changing economy.

Supporting one another, particularly the most vulnerable among us, is a collective responsibility that the settlement sector models every day. But just as we care for people, so too must we care for the environments that sustain us all.

Who Does this Paper Speak to?

This discussion paper primarily speaks to leaders and practitioners within Australia's settlement sector, including service providers delivering programs under the SETS program and beyond. Sustainable and resilient communities are a society-wide effort. The *Greenprint* therefore, is also directly relevant to policymakers, funders, researchers, and advocates, whose decisions shape the broader environment in which settlement occurs. The pathways forward rely on partners and stakeholders, including the private sector (especially renewable energy, sustainable construction, and regenerative agriculture) and vocational education providers. Finally, communities themselves are at the heart of the green transition.

While the challenges and opportunities presented here are shared across the sector, the pathways to action may differ. For this reason, future phases of the *Greenprint* initiative strive to co-design tailored tools, case studies, and frameworks to support role-specific implementation.

4. Australian Government (2023). *Budget 2023-24. Building a clean energy future.* https://archive.budget.gov.au/2023-24/factsheets/download/factsheet_clean_energy.pdf

Glossary of Key Terms

Adaptation: Actions or strategies aimed at adjusting to the effects of the changing climate, such as preparing for extreme weather events or modifying infrastructure to withstand higher temperatures.

Mitigation: Efforts to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as transitioning to renewable energy sources or improving on-site energy efficiency.

Resilience: The capacity of individuals, communities, or systems to recover quickly from climate-related challenges and maintain essential functions.

Sustainability: Practices and policies that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, balancing environmental, social, and economic factors.

Low-Carbon: Processes or systems that produce minimal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, typically through renewable energy or energy-efficient practices.

Environmentally Conscious: Awareness and actions that prioritise reducing harm to the environment, including waste reduction, sustainable procurement, and resource efficiency.

Climate-Conscious: An approach that integrates consideration of climate change impacts and solutions into decision-making, planning, and operations.

Climate Mobility: Refers to the movement of people compelled or influenced by the impacts of climate change and disasters, encompassing displacement, migration, evacuations, and planned relocations, as well as situations where individuals are unable or unwilling to move.

Scope 1 Emissions: Direct emissions from owned or controlled sources, such as fuel combustion in vehicles or boilers.
Example: Fuel burned in transportation fleets operated by settlement services.

Scope 2 Emissions: Indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating, and cooling consumed by the reporting entity.
Example: Electricity consumed in settlement service offices.

Scope 3 Emissions: All other indirect emissions occurring in the value chain of the reporting entity, including those from purchased goods and services, waste disposal, and employee commuting.
Example: Emissions from employee travel to workshops or procurement of office supplies.

The Intersection of Climate Change, Migration, and Settlement

Climate change is reshaping migration patterns and settlement needs globally. As extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and prolonged environmental degradation intensify, the settlement sector has an opportunity to adapt its practices to enhance resilience and support sustainable outcomes. As a key destination for climate-affected migrants and refugees from the Indo-Pacific region,⁵ Australia's settlement sector is well-positioned to explore approaches that respond to these evolving needs.

This section explores how the changing climate drives migration and settlement challenges, and the disproportionate impacts on migrant and refugee communities in Australia while identifying opportunities for the settlement sector to address these interconnected issues.

Global Context: Climate-Induced Migration

Climate change is a significant driver of migration. In 2022 alone, over 33 million people were displaced globally by disasters,⁶ illustrating the scale of the challenge. The Indo-Pacific region is particularly vulnerable, with rising sea levels threatening the very existence of small island nations such as Tuvalu and Kiribati. Australia has already begun offering permanent residency pathways for displaced populations from these regions, demonstrating leadership in responding to climate-induced migration.⁷ Climate change migration, encompassing forced displacement, planned relocation, and voluntary migration, requires tailored responses.⁸

Local Impact: Challenges for the Australian Settlement Sector

Australia's settlement sector supports over 8.3 million migrants and hosts over 54,000 refugees and 91,000 asylum seekers, many originating from climate-vulnerable regions.⁹

5. International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024*. Retrieved from <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int>.

6. International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024: Chapter 3 – Oceania*. Retrieved from <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/oceania>

7. Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS). (2024). *Climate refugees: The future for people displaced by climate change*. Retrieved from <https://www.racs.org.au/news/climate-refugees> AND McAdam, J., & Wood, T. (2023). *Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility*. UNSW Law & Justice.

8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*.

9. International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024: Chapter 3 – Oceania*. Retrieved from <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/oceania>

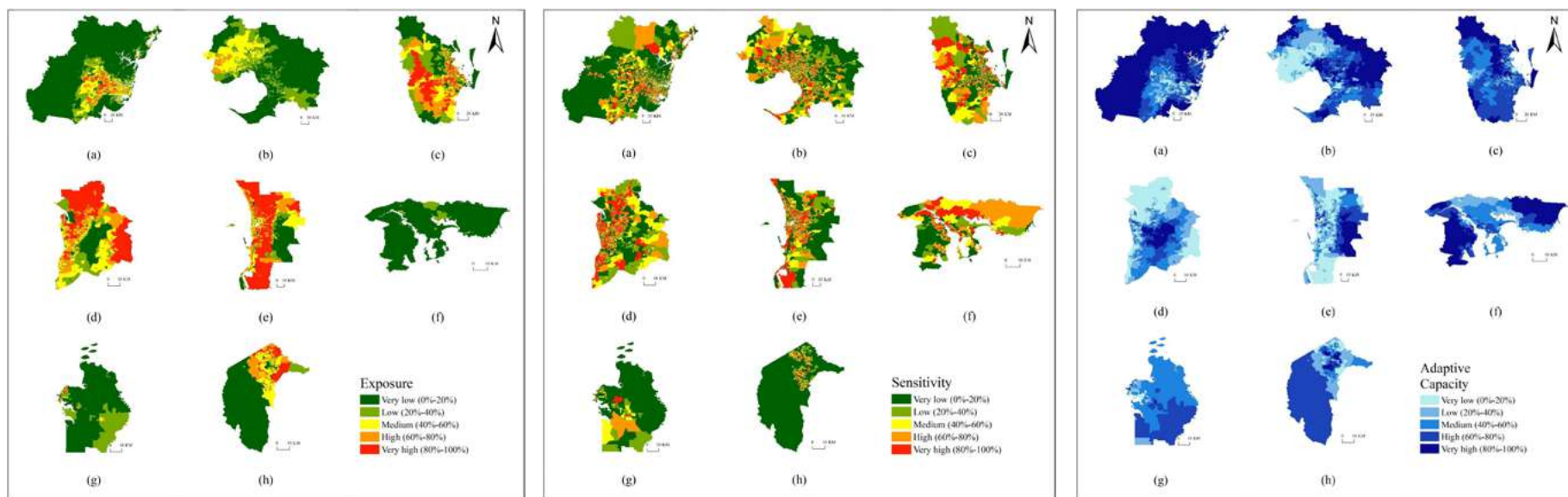


Figure 1. Comparing heat exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity across Australia's capital cities. Li, F., Yigitcanlar, T., Nepal, M., Nguyen, K., Dur, F., & Li, W. (2024).

In Australia, migrant and refugee communities face complex challenges exacerbated by the changing climate, including:

Heat Vulnerability

Urban areas with dense migrant populations experience heightened risks from heat stress due to poorly ventilated housing and limited access to cooling infrastructure.¹⁰

Disaster Displacement

Migrant and refugee communities in regional areas are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters with limited access to emergency services and recovery resources, such as the 17,000 displacements caused by floods in New South Wales and Queensland in 2022.¹¹

Health and Wellbeing

Climate-induced stressors, such as prolonged heatwaves, bushfire smoke, and extreme weather events, disproportionately impact the physical and mental health of migrants and refugees. Limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare exacerbates these challenges, leaving communities vulnerable to climate-related health risks.¹²

10. Li, F., Yigitcanlar, T., Nepal, M., Nguyen, K., Dur, F., & Li, W. (2024). *Assessing heat vulnerability and multidimensional inequity: Lessons from indexing the performance of Australian capital cities*. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 115, 105875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2024.105875>

11. International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024*. Retrieved from <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int>

12. Kelly, L. M., Hajjstassi, M., & Ramasundram, S. (2024). *Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience*. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 39(3), 49–58.



Firefighter extinguishing flames at a bushfire in Australia.

Access to Resources

Many migrant and refugee communities face barriers to accessing climate-resilient housing and reliable public transport systems, which increases their vulnerability during extreme weather events.¹³

Economic Vulnerability

Many migrants and refugees are employed in sectors susceptible to the impacts of a changing climate, such as agriculture and construction. Extreme weather events and changing climatic conditions can disrupt employment opportunities, impact workers' health and ability to work, leaving these communities economically insecure.

These challenges highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities of migrant and refugee communities.

13. McAdam, J., & Wood, T. (2023). *Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility*. UNSW Law & Justice.

Current Frameworks and Opportunities

Existing national and international frameworks offer valuable guidance for embedding climate consciousness and sustainability into Australia's settlement practices, enabling alignment with climate goals while improving outcomes for migrants and refugees.

Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework

The Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework outlines 11 interconnected domains critical to successful settlement, including housing, education, health, and community engagement. Embedding sustainability into these domains strengthens resilience and aligns with Australia's climate targets:

Housing Domain

Adopt energy-efficient designs and renewable energy in settlement housing to improve quality and reduce emissions.¹⁴ For example, integrating solar panels and insulation in public housing reduces energy costs and supports community resilience during extreme weather events.

Community Engagement Domain

Engage migrant communities in co-designing sustainability initiatives, such as waste reduction and renewable energy adoption, to foster inclusion and resilience.¹⁵ Actionable measures include workshops tailored to cultural contexts and partnerships with local organisations for ongoing sustainability projects.

Education Domain

Incorporate climate literacy into settlement education programs by partnering with schools, TAFE institutions, and community organisations. This can involve tailored workshops on sustainable practices, renewable energy technologies, and environmental stewardship to empower migrants and refugees with knowledge and skills relevant to Australia's green transition. For example, vocational training programs can integrate sustainability modules to prepare migrants for employment in the green economy.

Health Domain

Promote climate-adaptive health measures to protect migrant and refugee communities from climate-related risks. This includes integrating cooling centres into settlement hubs to mitigate heat-related illnesses and providing culturally appropriate health education on coping with extreme weather. Additionally, settlement services can collaborate with health providers to ensure access to mental health resources that address climate-induced stressors.

14. Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. (2014). *Pathways to Deep Decarbonisation in 2050: How Australia Can Prosper in a Low Carbon World*. ClimateWorks Australia and ANU. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/resource/pathways-to-deep-decarbonisation-in-2050-how-australia-can-prosper-in-a-low-carbon-world/>

15. McAdam, J., & Wood, T. (2023). *Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility*. UNSW Law & Justice.

Example: In Mount Druitt, a suburb in Western Sydney, Mission Australia Housing collaborated with Great Southern Bank to install a shared rooftop solar system in a 40-unit social housing complex. This initiative aims to reduce utility bills and enhance tenant comfort. Residents are projected to save approximately \$500 annually on energy costs.¹⁶



Modern suburban houses or Australian homes with solar panels installed on a tiled roof during an overcast and rainy day. Concept of energy efficiency and sustainability in neighborhood housing.

16. Mission Australia Housing Partnership. *Partnership to reduce energy costs for Mission Australia Housing tenants*. Available at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/media-centre/media-releases/partnership-reduce-energy-costs-for-mission-australia-housing-tenants>

Stakeholder Collaboration and the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework

The Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework (2023) emphasises collaboration across all levels of government, service providers, and community organisations to ensure effective settlement outcomes (Section 1.1).¹⁷ Embedding sustainability into these collaborative efforts enhances the sector's capacity to address climate-related challenges while aligning with national decarbonisation goals.

Key opportunities include:

Integrated Service Delivery

Embedding climate considerations into settlement services, from housing provision to employment training, requires collaboration across sectors to ensure consistency and scalability (Section 2).

Capacity Building

Training service providers to adopt sustainability practices, such as energy-efficient operations and waste management, strengthens their ability to meet both environmental and settlement goals (Section 2.2).

Inter-Governmental Coordination

Facilitating dialogue between federal, state, and local governments supports the alignment of settlement and sustainability priorities, ensuring cohesive policy implementation (Section 1.1).

Service Provider Partnerships

Strengthening partnerships among service providers fosters knowledge-sharing on innovative practices like renewable energy adoption and green procurement (Section 2.2).

Community Engagement

Actively involving migrant and refugee communities in sustainability planning ensures culturally relevant and inclusive solutions, fostering local ownership of climate initiatives (Section 3).

By integrating sustainability into these collaborative efforts, Australia's settlement sector can become a model for addressing climate and migration challenges simultaneously. Practical steps, such as co-designing community-driven initiatives or integrating renewable energy into service operations, reinforce the sector's leadership role in fostering sustainable and resilient communities.

¹⁷ Australian Government. (2023). *Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework*. Retrieved from <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settlement-policy-and-reform/refugee-and-humanitarian-entrant-settlement-and-integration-outcomes-framework>

Australian Settlement and Climate Action Policies

Recent policies, such as the Safeguard Mechanism Reforms (2023) and the Sustainable Procurement Guide (2024), provide a pathway for operational sustainability and alignment with Net Zero goals. Actionable steps for the settlement sector include:

Operational Emissions Reduction

Electrify offices and fleet vehicles to reduce emissions, lowering costs and aligning with Net Zero targets.¹⁸ Transitioning to electric vehicles significantly reduces direct emissions, particularly as the electricity grid incorporates more renewable energy sources.¹⁹

Sustainable Procurement

Prioritise low-carbon and energy-efficient products in procurement to support circular economy principles. Incorporating guidelines from the Sustainable Procurement Guide ensures compliance and strengthens overall sustainability outcomes.²⁰



Example: Through the Victorian Energy Upgrades (VEU) program, organisations in Victoria can reduce procurement costs by adopting shared resources and investing in energy-efficient appliances, demonstrating the financial and environmental benefits of sustainable practices.²¹

18. Climateworks Centre. (2022). *Government climate action: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Government-climate-action-Australia-Climateworks-Centre-December-2022.pdf>

19. Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). *Electric Vehicles and the Grid: Analysis, Gaps and Recommendations*. March 2022. Available at: <https://arena.gov.au/assets/2022/03/electric-vehicles-and-the-grid-analysis-gaps-and-recommendations.pdf>

20. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (2024). *Sustainable Procurement Guide*. Australian Government. Retrieved from <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sustainable-procurement-guide-2024.pdf>

21. Victorian Government. *Victorian Energy Upgrades Program*. Available at: <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades/businesses>

Global Practices Informing Local Solutions

International frameworks, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030, provide valuable insights for integrating sustainability into Australia’s settlement sector.

Key lessons include:

Energy Access

Ensuring reliable access to renewable energy in settlement services supports operational efficiency and reduces emissions.²² For example, deploying solar panels in community hubs can significantly lower energy costs while improving service reliability.



Men observing floodwaters, Brisbane floods 2011

Disaster Preparedness

Embedding risk reduction strategies, including staff training and resilient infrastructure, into settlement planning reduces vulnerabilities during climate-related emergencies.²³ For example, annual climate-readiness assessments could proactively identify vulnerabilities in housing and community services.

22. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*.

23. Kelly, L. M., Hajjstassi, M., & Ramasundram, S. (2024). *Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience*. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 39(3), 49–58.

Pathways for Collaboration and Action

To support sustainability goals and strengthen resilience for migrant and refugee communities, the settlement sector can adopt practical approaches that embed sustainability into operations, foster cross-sector partnerships, and empower communities. This section outlines key focus areas that position the sector to contribute meaningfully to Australia's Net Zero ambitions, respond to climate-related challenges, and ensure the communities it serves are both resilient and have agency in a changing climate.

The four key actionable pathways include:

1. Embedding Sustainability into Core Practices

Integrate environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient operations across the sector to reduce emissions and improve service delivery, aligning with Australia's broader climate goals.

2. Supporting Migrants and Refugees' Participation in the Green Economy

Enable pathways for migrants and refugees to contribute to and benefit from Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy through inclusive employment, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

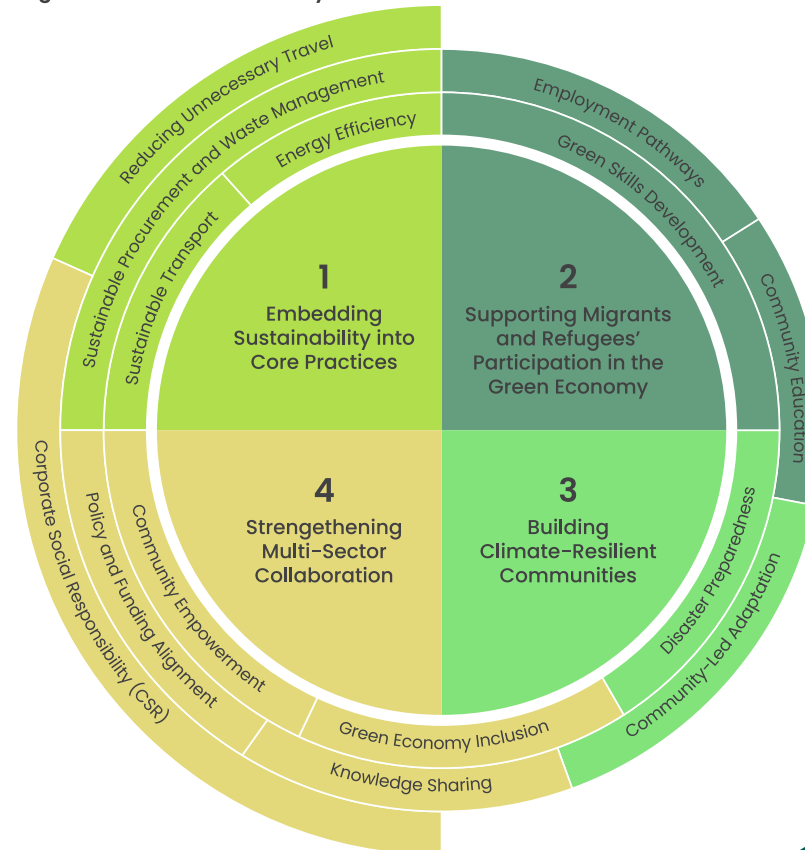
3. Building Climate-Resilient Communities

Empower migrant and refugee communities to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from climate-related impacts through localised, strengths-based, and equity-driven initiatives.

4. Strengthening Multi-Sector Collaboration

Foster cross-sector partnerships between government, industry, academia, and communities to drive coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable climate action within the settlement sector.

Integrated Actionable Pathways





1. Embedding Sustainability into Core Practices

Rationale: Operational improvements enhance the sector’s efficiency and capacity to deliver effective services, while mitigation efforts focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with Australia’s climate goals. By adopting these practices, the sector achieves operational improvements that enhance efficiency and support mitigation efforts through reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

1.1. Energy Efficiency: Settlement organisations conduct energy audits of settlement offices to identify areas for improvement. Retrofit buildings with energy-efficient technologies, such as LED lighting, improved insulation, and solar panels,²⁴ reducing Scope 2 emissions.

1.2. Sustainable Transport: Settlement organisations transition to electric or hybrid vehicles for service delivery to reduce Scope 1 emissions. Settlement programs collaborate with local governments to enhance public transport access for migrants and refugees.²⁵

1.3. Sustainable Procurement and Waste Management: Settlement organisations embed sustainability criteria in procurement policies to prioritise low-carbon goods and implement waste management programs, including recycling and composting initiatives.²⁶ These measures would reduce Scope 3 emissions.

1.4. Reducing Unnecessary Travel: Settlement organisations adopt virtual meeting platforms and develop travel policies that encourage sustainable travel options.²⁷ These operational improvements enhance efficiency and support Scope 3 emission reductions.

24. Climateworks Centre. (2022). *Government climate action: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Government-climate-action-Australia-Climateworks-Centre-December-2022.pdf>

25. Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. (2014). *Pathways to Deep Decarbonisation in 2050: How Australia Can Prosper in a Low Carbon World*. ClimateWorks Australia and ANU. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/resource/pathways-to-deep-decarbonisation-in-2050-how-australia-can-prosper-in-a-low-carbon-world/>

26. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (2024). *Sustainable Procurement Guide*. Australian Government. Retrieved from <https://www.dcccew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sustainable-procurement-guide-2024.pdf>

27. Australian National University. (2023). *Digital Solutions for Sustainability: Reducing Emissions Through Virtual Platforms*. Australian National University Press.



2. Supporting Migrants and Refugees' Participation in the Green Economy

Rationale: Migrants and refugees have the potential to contribute significantly to Australia's transition to a low-carbon economy. Supporting migrants' and refugees' participation in the green economy enables active contribution to Australia's climate transition while building community capacity for adaptation and resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

2.1. Green Skills Development: Settlement programs collaborate with vocational education providers to deliver training in renewable energy, sustainable construction, and waste management.²⁸ These initiatives equip communities with the skills needed to adapt to evolving employment markets shaped by climate change.

2.2. Employment Pathways: Settlement programs and government partner with industry to create job programs in green sectors, fostering active economic participation while ensuring inclusive policies that address barriers for migrants and refugees.²⁹

2.3. Community Education: Settlement programs and local government facilitate culturally tailored education on climate risks and adaptive strategies, empowering communities to actively participate in Australia's green transition.³⁰

28. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*

29. McAdam, J., & Wood, T. (2023). *Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility*. UNSW Law & Justice.

30. Li, F., Yigitcanlar, T., Nepal, M., Nguyen, K., Dur, F., & Li, W. (2024). Assessing heat vulnerability and multidimensional inequity: Lessons from indexing the performance of Australian capital cities. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 115, 105875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2024.105875>



3. Building Climate-Resilient Communities

Rationale: Strengthening the resilience of migrant and refugee communities is critical to ensuring their ability to withstand and recover from climate-related challenges while building long-term safety and wellbeing. This includes initiatives that improve communities' ability to withstand and recover from climate-related challenges.

3.1. Disaster Preparedness: Settlement programs and local government partner with emergency services to deliver culturally tailored disaster education and preparedness programs.³¹ Equip communities with tools and knowledge to respond effectively to extreme weather events (such as heatwaves, floods and bushfires), enhancing community resilience.

3.2. Community-Led Adaptation: Settlement providers, local government and communities co-design initiatives that empower communities to address climate risks, such as urban greening projects and heatwave response plans.³² Leverage data and tools, such as those provided by the *National Urban Heat Observatory*, to assess vulnerabilities and prioritise adaptive action.³³

31. Kelly, L. M., Hajistassi, M., & Ramasundram, S. (2024). *Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience*. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 39(3), 49–58.

32. Li, F., Yigitcanlar, T., Nepal, M., Nguyen, K., Dur, F., & Li, W. (2024). Assessing heat vulnerability and multidimensional inequity: Lessons from indexing the performance of Australian capital cities. Sustainable Cities and Society, 115, 105875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2024.105875>

33. UNSW Newsroom. (2023). *New National Urban Heat Observatory Will Help Drive More Climate-Resilient Cities*. Retrieved from <https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2023/12/new-national-urban-heat-observatory-will-help-drive-more-climate>

4. Strengthening Multi-Sector Collaboration

Rationale: Collaboration across government, private industry, academia, and community organisations is critical to advancing environmental responsibility and sustainability in the settlement sector.				
4.1. Policy and Funding Alignment: Government should establish policies and funding mechanisms that enable mitigation efforts, such as renewable energy adoption in community hubs, while promoting operational improvements like waste reduction and resource efficiency. ³⁴	4.2. Green Economy Inclusion: Settlement providers and government should collaborate with the private sector (e.g. renewable energy, sustainable construction, regenerative agriculture) to foster active participation of migrants and refugees in green industries while implementing inclusive practices that ensure equitable access to training, mentorship, and employment opportunities. ³⁵	4.3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Settlement organisations adopt CSR initiatives to support community greening projects, such as urban agriculture and reforestation, which provide environmental benefits and foster community engagement. ³⁶	4.4. Knowledge Sharing: Settlement organisations and government establish partnerships with research institutions, such as UNSW’s National Heat Vulnerability Observatory (NaHVO), and private companies to evaluate and improve sustainability initiatives through evidence-based approaches. ³⁷ By leveraging data on urban heat impacts, these partnerships can inform targeted interventions that enhance climate resilience in migrant and refugee communities.	4.5. Community Empowerment: Settlement organisations and local government foster community ownership of sustainability projects by involving migrants and refugees in co-design and implementation processes. ³⁸ Activities such as community gardens build collective resources, foster a sense of belonging, connect communities, and build social capital.

34. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (2024). *Safeguard Mechanism Reforms Factsheet*. Australian Government. Retrieved from <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/emissions-reporting/national-greenhouse-energy-reporting-scheme/safeguard-mechanism>

35. Climateworks Centre. (2022). *Government climate action: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Government-climate-action-Australia-Climateworks-Centre-December-2022.pdf> AND United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*.

36. Habitat for Humanity Australia. (2023). *Housing and Climate Resilience*. Retrieved from <https://habitat.org.au/what-we-do/overseas/housing-climate-resilience/>

37. UNSW Newsroom. (2023). *New National Urban Heat Observatory Will Help Drive More Climate-Resilient Cities*. Retrieved from <https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2023/12/new-national-urban-heat-observatory-will-help-drive-more-climate> AND Climateworks Centre. (2022). *Government climate action: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Government-climate-action-Australia-Climateworks-Centre-December-2022.pdf>

38. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*.

Next Steps

The settlement sector sits at the intersection of climate, migration, and community, and thus has a unique opportunity to lead. By embedding sustainability into its operations and building resilience, it can improve outcomes for migrants and refugees, reduce costs, and support Australia's broader climate goals.

This paper provides a starting point, setting a shared foundation for conversation and collaboration as the sector begins the work of responding to the changing climate in ways that are operationally practical, community-informed, and aligned with Australia's environmental goals. From addressing climate-induced vulnerabilities to advancing opportunities for participation in the green economy, stakeholders across all levels of government, private industry, academia, and community organisations can unite to drive systemic change. Through sustained collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to equity and environmental responsibility, the settlement sector has an opportunity to lead by example, transforming climate challenges into opportunities for sustainable development and inclusive growth. These initiatives are not only necessary to align with national and global climate objectives but also to ensure the long-term wellbeing of vulnerable populations in Australia.

To move from concept to implementation, sector leadership and engagement will be critical. We invite stakeholders across the settlement ecosystem to help shape the next phase of this work.

Pathways for Different Actors

Service Providers	Policymakers & Funders	Researchers & Experts	Peak Bodies & Advocates
• Nominate for the <i>Greenprint Working Group</i>, facilitated by SETSCoP • Begin informal mapping of energy use, waste, and procurement practices • Explore staff interest in sustainability champions or internal green teams	• Engage with providers to co-design policy levers and funding models that incentivise sustainable operations • Support cross-sector forums on climate, migration, and community resilience	• Partner with sector organisations to evaluate pilots and measure environmental/social outcomes • Contribute to evidence-building on sustainable settlement practices	• Convene members to explore a sector-wide sustainability charter • Identify shared needs for training and capability development • Amplify sector leadership through public advocacy

1. Be Part of Sector Co-Design

- A sector-led working group will be established to guide development of practical tools, shared principles, and pilot opportunities.
- Insights from service providers, peak bodies, and community leaders will be invited to share insights on what sustainability looks like in practice across diverse contexts.

3. Pilot, Measure and Share

- The next phase will include the development and support service providers in mapping their current environmental impact.
- Organisations are invited to pilot test practical changes, including energy efficiency, procurement, transport, community readiness and engagement, with sector-wide learnings to follow.

The settlement sector has a unique opportunity to lead. By taking action now—through dialogue, piloting, and partnership—we can shape a more resilient, and future-focused foundation for migrant and refugee settlement in Australia.

While the challenges and opportunities presented here are shared across the sector, the pathways to action may differ. For this reason, future phases of the *Greenprint* initiative will strive to co-design tailored tools, case studies, and frameworks to support role-specific implementation.

2. Build Capacity Through Partnerships

- Establish partnerships with decarbonisation and sustainability specialists to help settlement providers identify emissions reduction strategies that are realistic and cost-effective.
- Capacity-building opportunities will be scoped to support workforce readiness and practical upskilling.

4. Work Towards Shared Principles

- Establish a voluntary sector-wide charter or statement of shared commitment, reflecting collective values and guiding principles for environmental sustainability in settlement.

References

- Australian Government. (2023). *Budget 2023–24: Building a clean energy future*. https://archive.budget.gov.au/2023-24/factsheets/download/factsheet_clean_energy.pdf
- Australian Government. (2023). *Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework*. <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settlement-policy-and-reform/refugee-and-humanitarian-entrant-settlement-and-integration-outcomes-framework>
- Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). (2022). *Electric vehicles and the grid: Analysis, gaps and recommendations*. <https://arena.gov.au/assets/2022/03/electric-vehicles-and-the-grid-analysis-gaps-and-recommendations.pdf>
- Climateworks Centre. (2022). *Government climate action: Pathways to deep decarbonisation in Australia*. <https://www.climateworkscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Government-climate-action-Australia-Climateworks-Centre-December-2022.pdf>
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). (2024). *Sustainable Procurement Guide*. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sustainable-procurement-guide-2024.pdf>
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). (2024). *Driving the Nation Fund*. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/transport/driving-the-nation-fund>
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024*. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/foreword/foreword>
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). *World Migration Report 2024: Chapter 3 – Oceania*. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-3/oceania>
- Kelly, L. M., Hajistassi, M., & Ramasundram, S. (2024). *Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience*. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 39 (3), 49–58.
- Li, F., Yigitcanlar, T., Nepal, M., Nguyen, K., Dur, F., & Li, W. (2024). *Assessing heat vulnerability and multidimensional inequity: Lessons from indexing the performance of Australian capital cities*. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 115, 105875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2024.105875>
- McAdam, J., & Wood, T. (2023). *Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility*. UNSW Law & Justice.
- Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS). (2024). *Climate refugees: The future for people displaced by climate change*. <https://www.racs.org.au/news/climate-refugees>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030*. <https://www.unhcr.org/au/climate-change-and-displacement-0>
- Victorian Government. (n.d.). *Victorian Energy Upgrades Program*. <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades/about-the-veu-program>
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2024). *WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record – about 1.55°C above pre-industrial level*. <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2024-warmest-year-record-about-155degc-above-pre-industrial-level>



Contact Us

The Social Policy Group

W: www.socialpolicy.org.au

T: (+61) 2 6162 0361

E: info@socialpolicy.org.au

Canberra: 46 Jardine St, Kingston ACT 2604

Melbourne: 408 Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065