

Living and working in regional South Australia: a case study of three towns

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

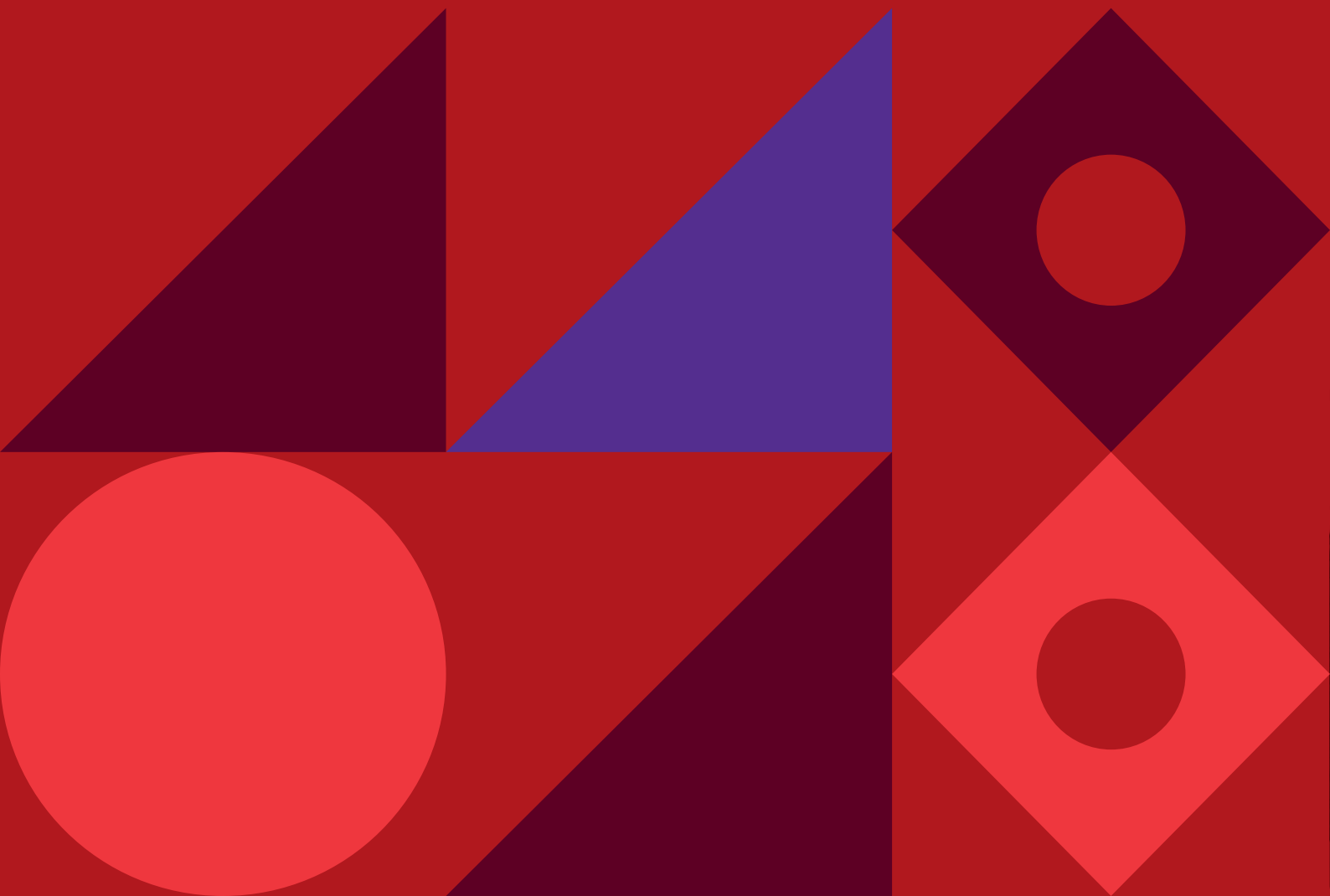
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Introduction

International migrants to Australia whatever their visa type are generally highly urbanised, tending to settle in capital cities. This trend is reflected in the State of South Australia, where the majority of migrants settle in metropolitan Adelaide. There are, however, small but significant flows of migrants who move beyond the city to certain regional towns and districts. Although migrants follow various pathways to these locations, previous research has shown that most migrants are initially attracted to or willing to move to regional areas for employment (Feist et al. 2014; Hugo et al. 2006; McDonald et al. 2008). Others, particularly those with a refugee background, move to be with extended families and small communities of fellow nationals. A proportion stay on permanently to enjoy cheaper living conditions, safe environment, quiet lifestyles and other unique aspects of regional living (Barrie et al. 2017).



This study concentrates on three such regional towns in South Australia. Naracoorte in the Limestone Coast region and the Rural City of Murray Bridge both have a long history of international migrant settlement that has fluctuated according to economic and political conditions. Home to strong and vibrant contemporary migrant communities, these towns have become more diverse over the past two decades. The third regional town, Bordertown, is also in the Limestone Coast and has had a more recent influx of international migrants spanning over a decade. All three locations are well known to researchers, policymakers and service providers involved in supporting and understanding migrant settlement. The current study revisits these towns to 'check-in' with migrants and update our understanding of how they are experiencing living and working in these locations. This is critical for policymakers and service planners to ensure appropriate design, scale and mode of delivery of such services, yet there have been few recent studies focusing on these issues in the Australian context (Wickramaarachchi and Butt 2014).

This report collates information from secondary sources, focusing in particular on a series of community consultations conducted by staff from the Australian Migrant Resource Centre with migrants in each of the locations mentioned above. The focus groups and other consultations were designed to consider whether the needs and aspirations of these new communities align with those of service and community support providers

and councils, and to bring emerging issues to the consultative table which have more recently centered on population growth and sustainability, and the need for housing.

Overall, migrant participants in the focus groups and other consultations reported positive settlement experiences. Many felt welcomed by their local communities, giving rise for many into a strong sense of belonging. We report on the issues and challenges that migrants face living and working regionally, as reported by different groups having arrived under a diversity of visas and been employed under a range of conditions. Furthermore, the question of migrants' future is raised, with migrants divided on whether they will stay living regionally and some reasons why. Thus, we gain insight into migrants' lived experiences in these specific locations, with implications for understanding regional migrant settlement more comprehensively, and broadly.

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Background

Regional migration has received considerable attention recently from researchers and policy makers interested in who is settling in regional Australia and why, what their experiences are, and what benefits they offer regional communities facing complex social, economic and demographic challenges (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014; Griffiths et al. 2010; Hugo 2008; Hugo et al. 2006; Wickramaarachchi and Butt 2014; Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008). In some areas, for example, slow growth rates or population decline caused by low fertility and net outmigration, and combined with an ageing population, have led to skills and labour shortages (Argent and Tonts 2015). Migrants can offer regional towns a lifeline: an invigorated workforce, families with children to attend schools, customers for local businesses as well as civic and economic benefits. Indeed, international migration, including that of humanitarian entrants, is increasingly viewed as fundamental to regional development in Australia (DIAC 2011; Hugo et al. 2013).

Using 2016 Census data, the Regional Australia Institute showed international migration can offset population decline in regional areas. Of the 550 Local Government Areas (LGAs) across Australia that they reviewed, 151 were offsetting population decline by attracting international migrants (Regional Australia Institute 2017). More recent research has demonstrated strong levels of outmigration from regional and remote areas by migrants, suggesting many ultimately flow back to capital cities and other major centres (Raymer and Baffour 2018). Still, in South Australia, the Overseas-born population increased in many more of the 47 regional LGAs than the Australia-born population between the three most recent censuses (Table 1).

Table 1: Population increase/decrease for selected populations in metropolitan and regional LGAs in South Australia, 2006, 2011, 2016 censuses

	2006-2011	2011-2016
Metro (21 LGAs)		
Overseas-born population increase	21	19
Overseas-born population decrease	0	2
Australia-born population increase	18	16
Australia-born population decrease	3	5
Regional (47 LGAs)		
Overseas-born population increase	38	29
Overseas-born population decrease	9	18
Australia-born population increase	28	14
Australia-born population decrease	19	33

Source: ABS, 2017

Table 2 shows population change between censuses in the study site LGAs, highlighting the significance of the Overseas-born population for these regions. In Murray Bridge, the migrant population increased by around 30 percent at the 2011 and 2016 censuses, while the increase in the Australia-born population was less and appears to be declining. In Naracoorte and Lucindale LGA and in Tatiara where Bordertown is situated, there has been an increase in the Overseas-born population and a decline in the Australia-born, though the increase of Overseas-born in Tatiara between the most recent censuses was small.

Table 2: Population change for selected populations between censuses in study site LGAs, 2006, 2011, 2016 censuses

	Overseas-born					Australia-born				
	2006	2011	Change (%)	2016	Change (%)	2006	2011	Change (%)	2016	Change (%)
Naracoorte/ Lucindale	599	871	45.4	1,129	29.6	7,113	6,894	-3.08	6,657	-3.44
Tatiara	452	659	45.8	663	0.6	6,075	5,696	-6.24	5,324	-6.53
Murray Bridge	1,802	2,399	33.1	3,068	27.9	14,944	16,160	8.14	16,266	0.66

Source: ABS, 2017

Migrants take a range of pathways to regional Australia. A common route is through the large-scale, centralized Migration Program introduced in the mid-1990s. The program comprises a range of visas directing permanent and temporary, skilled and business migrants into regional Australia where they are required to stay for a minimum of two years, but hopefully stay longer. Increasingly, refugee and humanitarian migrants have also settled in parts of regional Australia through the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) Humanitarian Settlement Program. Direct regional settlement of humanitarian entrants was not undertaken in a planned way by the Federal government until 2003 when a review led to new policies seeking to relieve the pressure humanitarian entrants place on services in larger centres, boost population in regional towns and benefit migrants (Goł biowska 2012; McDonald et al. 2008).

The Limestone Coast, and specifically Mt Gambier, was established as an official settlement location, settling humanitarian entrants successfully since 2007. Additionally, temporary bridging visa holders, and temporary (3 years) and Safe Haven (5 years) visa holders have settled in Mt Gambier, Naracoorte and Bordertown taking advantage of available work in primary industries. A small number of skilled, refugee and other visa holders participate in secondary migration to the regions; a voluntarily move from their first settlement location in Australia to a second, regional one (McDonald et al. 2008). Migrants have taken a combination of these pathways to Naracoorte, Bordertown and Murray Bridge.

There are key differences between migrants who enter Australia through the general Migration Program and those coming through the Humanitarian Program, including their different pre-migration experiences, the subsequent expectations of

them and the support they receive when they arrive. Skill stream migrants entering through the Migration Program are generally considered self-sufficient, arriving with more assets than other groups, as well as marketable skills (Junankar et al. 1993). The government has largely left these migrants to settle themselves, while support of Family stream entrants has been left to relatives. Reflecting their higher levels of need, humanitarian entrants and refugees receive the most assistance upon arrival, especially in the critical first year, with some assistance given to a broader range of visa holders in their first 5 years. The assistance varies for different visa holders, yet we have incomplete knowledge about how successfully migrants settle in regional Australia, and how they experience living and working there.

Outline of report

With this brief background, the report moves on to Section 1 which provides an overview of the study, including the study aims and objectives and the methods of data collection. Section 2 introduces the regional study sites, using data from the ABS Census of Population and Housing to provide a picture of the demographic composition of the towns and their employment landscape.

Section 3 discusses the study findings focusing on the themes raised by the study objectives - what attracts migrants to regional areas, migrants' sense of belonging, their housing and employment experiences, plans for the future and the broader issues and challenges migrants face living where they do. In concluding, the major issues migrants face are summarized as well as possible areas of future research.

Section 1: Study overview

This study of living and working in regional South Australia is a collaboration between the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC) and the Hugo Centre for Migration and Population Research, and a culmination of the intersecting research histories, interests and agendas of these organisations. The AMRC specialises in settlement, community development, training, and employment initiatives for migrants, especially those of refugee background wherever they reside in metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia. The Hugo Centre is at the cutting edge of migration and population research with special interest in international migration, migrant settlement and regional migration.

This report presents data collected by the AMRC in a series of consultative forums conducted by its regional networks - Migrant Resource Centres in Naracoorte, Bordertown and Murray Bridge. Roundtables such as these assist the AMRC in identifying key issues faced by their clients, and in the planning and development of services and special projects. These data have been integrated with secondary data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and data sourced during a desktop review and limited academic literature review, to provide a useful snapshot of the settlement experiences of migrants living in these areas, and one that updates previous work by both organisations.

Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this study was to 'check in' with migrants living and working in the selected regional towns and understand their current settlement experiences, focusing on what attracts them to these regions, their sense of belonging, housing and employment experiences, plans for the future, and especially the issues and challenges they face living regionally. Identifying and addressing these issues are important to rural communities when trying to attract and retain migrants.

To that end, the main objectives of this study are:

- To investigate what attracts migrants to live in regional South Australia, what they enjoy about living there and how these factors might influence any future moves
- To understand the broader issues migrants face living in regional South Australia including housing, sustainable employment, education and training, access to services and civic participation.
- To use data from the 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing to compile a basic profile of the selected regional areas - Naracoorte/Bordertown and Murray Bridge.

Research methodology

The impetus for this report and the focus of much of the discussion is driven by the ongoing engagement of the AMRC and its regional MRCs and other networks with migrants and stakeholders living and working in the study sites through regular, dedicated community forums. The AMRC convenes the Connecting Settlement and Community Services Forum (CSCS) in Naracoorte and Bordertown and auspices the Murraylands Multicultural Network (MMN) in Murray Bridge, which provide regular opportunity for key service providers, community leaders, local government, industry and Regional Development Australia (RDA) to meet to identify good practice, service improvement issues and solutions to address them. This report references three CSCS forums held in Bordertown and two in Naracoorte in 2019, as well as two MMN forums in Murray Bridge, plus a number of initiatives conducted by the Office of the Hon Nick McBride, local State Parliament member, on concerns raised through local government and by the CSCS regarding housing. The above forums are mainly attended by local service providers, sharing settlement information and raising issues from a service perspective.

This ongoing work informed two focus group-style community consultations held in Naracoorte and Murray Bridge in October 2019, which aimed to 'check in' with AMRC client recipients about their experiences of living and working in these locations. The focus groups were designed to be as inclusive as possible, concentrating on structured survey questions that produced quantitative and qualitative data on a range of topics, informed by current settlers, hopefully to assist future regional population movements. Round tables were convened by trained facilitators who engaged up to ten participants in discussions on settlement transition achievements – what did they like about living and working in their regional town, and what were barriers and gaps that they would like addressed. In both locations, one round table consisted of a culturally diverse group made up of overseas skilled and long-term established migrants who did not require



an interpreter. All other focus groups in Murray Bridge and Naracoorte were organized by country of origin and required interpreters for migrants from China, Afghanistan, and DR Congo.

Participant recruitment for the focus groups was organized by the AMRC through regional MRCs and migrant community networks using face-to-face, email, Facebook and text messaging. Employers also promoted the focus groups, which were held on the weekend to allow maximum participation. All participants signed a privacy and confidentiality document, giving permission for the use of data collected as secondary data in any related follow-on studies, including by third party organisations. Meanwhile, assurances were given that personal information would not be used to identify them. Collated responses were made available to the authors for analysis and inclusion in the report.

This report also includes data from associated community consultations in Bordertown in 2018/2019. These informal forums were more general and less structured, seeking to provide migrants with program updates and canvas their feedback on a range of issues, focusing on gaining their priority future settlement needs and reasons for future decisions on staying or leaving their current settlement location. This period saw significant changes to the Bordertown migrant population, where the profile changed from sole men sharing housing, to women and children arriving to join their partners and requiring different accommodation. Topics raised during the consultations included: housing, migration matters (Community Support Program – CSP), citizenship, English classes, technical and tertiary education, and family reunion. Data and minutes from each of these meetings, consultations and focus-group style round tables are reported in detail and form the basis of the discussion in Section 3.

Study population

It is important to note that the responses given during the AMRC consultations reflect only the views of the participants and not the broader migrant or ethnic communities they may represent. Nevertheless, a relatively diverse range of views was captured during the consultations in terms of migrants' country of birth, ethnicity, age and gender, length of residence in Australia and length of residence in the regional town. In total, 54 migrants participated in focus group discussions in Naracoorte and 31 in Murray Bridge. The Bordertown consultations were attended by over 50 community members, most of Afghan background.

As well as asking focus-group participants their views on a range of pre-determined questions in the group setting, facilitators collected demographic information from individuals plus details about their family structure, when they migrated, visa details, and English language proficiency. Some of these details have been included in Tables 3 and 4 below. Most focus groups included the views of both male and female participants, except the Samoa/Fiji-born table in Naracoorte which was entirely male. Similarly, there was a diversity of views canvassed in terms of migrants' length of residence in each location with some very new arrivals represented in both Naracoorte and Murray Bridge, and in each focus group.

As described above, participants in the focus group consultations in Naracoorte and Murray Bridge were organized according to their country of birth, which are listed in Tables 3 and 4. Where there were only a few participants from a country, participants were brought together to form a culturally diverse group. In Naracoorte, migrants in this group came from Afghanistan, Congo, Malaysia, Sudan, Laos, Thailand and Spain. In Murray Bridge the culturally diverse group comprised migrants from Philippines, New Zealand and India.

Table 3: Community consultation participants, Naracoorte

Country of birth	Participants (n)	Gender	Length of residence		Speaks English very well or well
			Longest	Shortest	
Afghanistan	8	6 female 3 male	4.5 years	4 months	1
Samoa and Fiji	17	17 male	3 months	1 month	17
China	16	8 male 13 male	4 years	2 weeks	4
Mixed	13	9 male 4 male	10 years	3 months	7

Source: AMRC community consultation, Naracoorte

Table 4: Community consultation participants, Murray Bridge

Country of birth	Participants (n)	Gender	Length of residence		Speaks English very well or well
			Longest	Shortest	
China	14	8 female 6 male	25 years	2 months	6
DR Congo	8	4 female 4 male	9 years	3 weeks	3
Mixed	9	6 female 3 male	18 years	1 week	8

Source: AMRC community consultation, Murray Bridge

In terms of age, the Murray Bridge participants from China and DR Congo were all aged between 25 and 55 years old, in the prime working ages, with the majority aged in their 20s and 30s. Migrants in the mixed group in Murray Bridge tended to be older, with five of the nine participants aged 60 and over. The oldest participant in this group was aged 74. Again, in Naracoorte most participants from China and Afghanistan were of working age, though slightly older working age than Murray Bridge, with most people aged in their 30s and 40s. The mixed group in Naracoorte was split almost evenly between people aged in their 20s-30s and people aged in their 40s-50s.

The Samoa/Fiji-born focus group proved an anomaly on almost every count. These temporary work migrants were all male and all very recently arrived. Although the maximum length of stay allowed by their provisional work visas (subclass 403) is two years, all had been in the Naracoorte area for three months or less. The majority were aged in their 20s, with the remainder aged in their 30s.

Section 2: Study sites

Overview

The study sites chosen for this pilot are well known to both the AMRC and the Hugo Centre as contemporary, regional locations that are popular with migrants attracted to job opportunities, particularly in primary industries. To support the sustainable settlement, employment and social participation of these burgeoning migrant communities, the AMRC has established Migrant Resource Centres in Naracoorte, Bordertown and Murray Bridge, while researchers have been drawn to these locations to investigate the processes underlying migrant flows, migrants' settlement experiences and the outcomes for migrants and regional communities.

The history of migrant settlement in both the Limestone Coast and Murray Bridge and its surrounding areas extends back to the post-War period when Greek and Italian migrants led an 'agricultural' migration from metropolitan areas (Hugo 1975; Hugo and Menzies 1980; Price 1963). Since then, there have been several distinct waves of migration to Murray Bridge, including; Afghani's on Temporary Protection Visas in 2001-2002; Sudanese migrants relocating from Adelaide around 2005; and Chinese temporary visa-holders recruited directly from China over the past two decades (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingham 2009). These groups were 'self-settlers' driven by the prospect of job opportunities available in the town, with workers often arriving alone to be joined by families later (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingham 2009).

Although Murray Bridge has been considered several times as a location for the Federal government's program of direct regional settlement for humanitarian entrants, it has never been selected. In the Limestone Coast, however, Mount Gambier and Grant have both been direct settlement locations alongside an "organic" flow of refugee-humanitarian migrants into the Limestone Coast towns of Naracoorte and Bordertown occurring through family linkages outside any planned settlement framework (Feist et al. 2014).

Network or chain migration has been critical to sustaining flows of migrants to both Naracoorte and Murray Bridge. Migration networks are social (or personal) networks based on family/household, friendship and community ties and relationships that exist across time and space (Boyd 1989). These relationships serve as conduits of information and social and financial support (Boyd 1989 p. 639), and therefore reduce the costs and risks associated with migration (Massey et al. 1994). Previous research in Murray Bridge found significant and long-standing networks extending back to migrants' hometowns in rural China and Taiwan, and, from early Sudanese settlers in Murray Bridge back to the broader Sudanese community in Adelaide (Barrie et al. 2017).

Similarly, more than half the participants in a study of migrants in the Limestone coast knew family and friends in the area before they moved there (Feist et al. 2014).

Over time Murray Bridge has established itself as an attractive destination for migrants to settle through the active and ongoing support of settlement by local government and employers. In 2003, Murray Bridge declared itself "Refugee Friendly" and adopted the term "new neighbours" to describe migrant arrivals, while initiatives such as the All Culture Fest has given a platform for local residents from migrant and refugee backgrounds to share their culture and stories with the Murraylands community. Long standing and productive partnerships between local government, the Murraylands MRC, RDA and industry have further fostered integration.

Similarly, partnerships in Bordertown and Naracoorte between local government, the Bordertown and Naracoorte MRCs, industry and service club partners have worked to welcome newcomers and assist migrant integration in these areas, especially women and children reuniting with family. Partners have proven responsive to the complex needs of a diversity of visa holders who may be seasonal workers, those on fixed temporary visas and those on permanent visas.

Employment

Figure 1 shows the proximity of the study sites to each other and Adelaide. Naracoorte and Bordertown are two towns in the Limestone Coast region situated in the South East of South Australia. Naracoorte is the largest town in the Naracoorte and Lucindale LGA, with a population of around 6,000 people (ABS 2017). It lies around 340km from Adelaide, a three-and-a-half-hour drive. Bordertown falls within the Tatiara LGA 250km from Adelaide and is the largest town in the district with around 2,900 people (ABS 2017). Census data presented in this report is for LGAs to capture those migrants who live outside the small towns, but who may work in them or rely on its services.

The Limestone Coast economy relies heavily on agriculture, particularly cereal cropping and sheep and beef farming, but also wine, forestry and fishing. In fact, Table 5 highlights the importance of agriculture, forestry and fishing industries which employ more than a quarter of the population in the Naracoorte and Lucindale (26.1 %) and Tatiara (28.8 %) LGAs. In both places manufacturing and retail are the next most significant industries.

Table 5: Industry of employment, employed persons, Limestone Coast LGAs, 2016

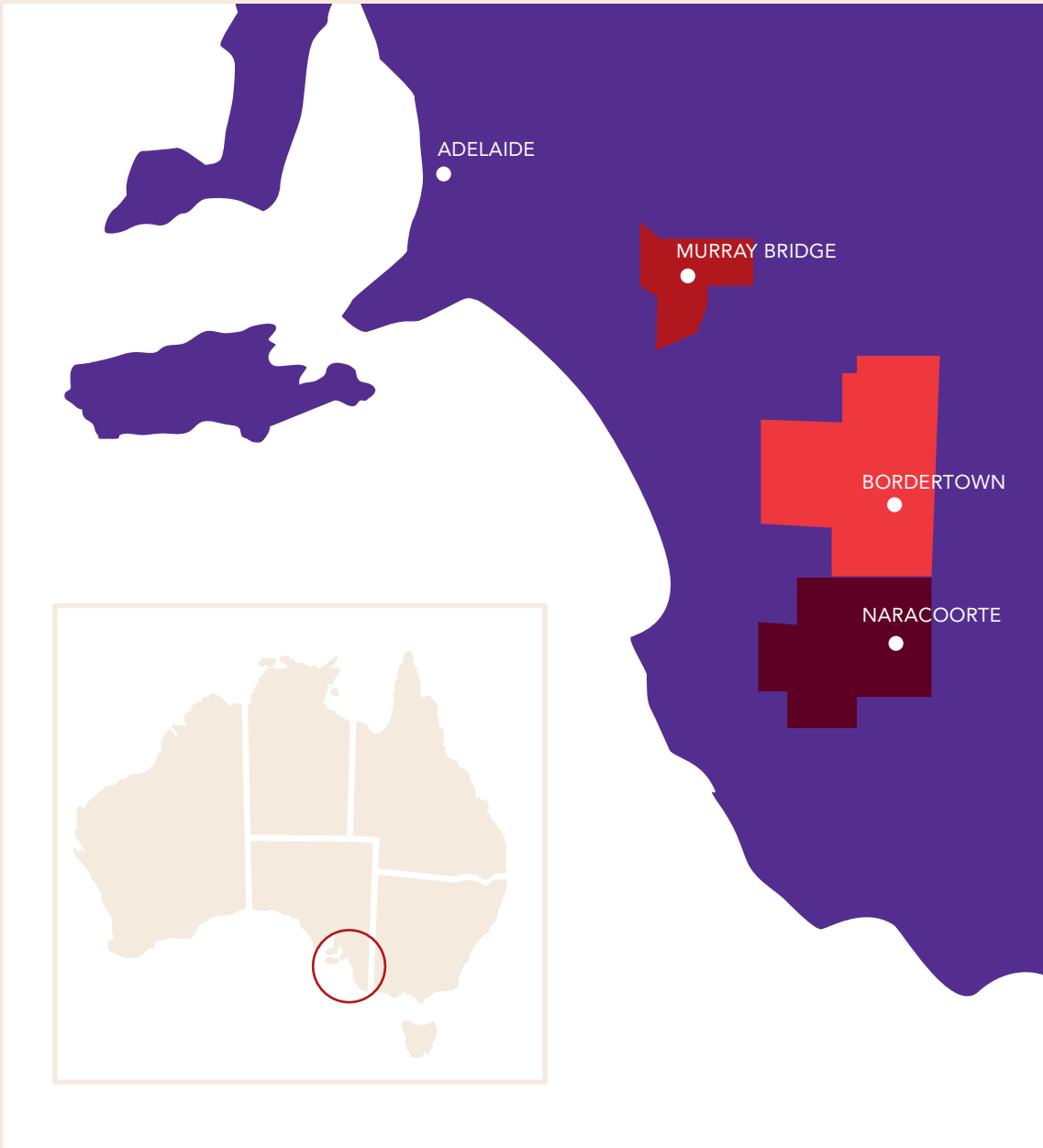
Industry	Naracoorte/Lucindale		Tatiara	
	n	%	n	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1,108	26.1	988	28.8
Manufacturing	519	12.2	463	13.5
Retail Trade	434	10.2	356	10.4
Health Care and Social Assistance	382	9.0	261	4.6
Construction	262	6.2	191	5.6
Education and Training	227	5.3	181	5.3
Accommodation and Food Services	185	4.4	125	3.6
Wholesale Trade	146	3.4	139	4.0
Professional, Scientific & Technical	144	3.4	73	2.1
Other Services	139	3.3	140	4.1
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	138	3.3	139	4.0
Total Employed	4,245	100	3,436	100

The Limestone Coast is also a tourist destination with visitors attracted to the natural environment, including national parks, geological and coastal sites, and the Limestone coast wine zone.

Murray Bridge is located on the banks of the River Murray, 75km south-east of the capital city Adelaide. It is the largest city in the Murraylands region, with a population of 20,862 people (ABS 2016). Although Murray Bridge serves as the centre of a major agricultural district, its main industries of employment are retail trade, manufacturing, and health care and social assistance (Table 6). Together these employ over

one third of the Murray Bridge population (36.7 %). Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries account for less than 10 percent of jobs (8.7%). Both the town of Murray Bridge and the Murray River on which it sits are tourist attractions, while the proximity of Murray Bridge to Adelaide – just one-hour driving time - makes it an attractive location for people to take advantage of low cost housing within commuting distance of a major business district, an important point of difference from other rural and regional areas in Australia.

Figure 1: Map of study sites and proximity to Adelaide



Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016

Table 6: Industry of employment, employed persons, Murray Bridge (RC), 2016

Industry	n	%
Retail Trade	1,088	12.9
Manufacturing	1,025	12.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	992	11.7
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	734	8.7
Construction	605	7.2
Wholesale Trade	542	6.4
Education and Training	484	5.7
Accommodation and Food Services	479	5.7
Public Administration and Safety	469	5.5
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	374	4.4
Total employed	8,454	100.0

Source: ABS, 2017

Table 7 provides detail about the types of jobs people work in at the study sites, showing the top five occupations for the total population and occupation rank for the Overseas-born. The predominance of farm work in Naracoorte and Lucindale is clear with four of the top five occupations involving either crop or livestock farming. Similarly, farm-related occupations comprise three of the top five occupations in Tatiara. In Murray Bridge, top jobs are more varied and do not include farm work. Rather the strong retail industry is evident with sales assistants the top occupation and aged and disabled carers also in the top five. Importantly, these data capture the significance of meat processing jobs for local and migrant populations. Anecdotally,

we know regional meat processing facilities actively recruit and rely on a migrant workforce to sustain their businesses. Certainly, many of the migrants participating in AMRC consultations were employed by TEYS Australia in Naracoorte, JBS in Bordertown or Thomas Foods in Murray Bridge. Equally, these employers contribute significantly to sustainable employment and settlement outcomes for migrants. Census data in Table 7 bear these trends out with meat processing jobs ranking either top or second for the Overseas-born population.

Table 7: Top 5 occupations for total population and rank for Overseas-born population, selected LGAs, South Australia, 2016

Naracoorte and Lucindale (DC)	Rank for OS-born	Tatiara (DC)	Rank for OS-born	Murray Bridge (RC)	Rank for OS-born
Livestock Farmers		Mixed Crop & Livestock Farmers		Sales Assistants (General)	
Crop Farm Workers	1	Livestock Farmers		Meat, Poultry & Seafood Process Workers	2
Sales Assistants (General)		Crop Farmers		Meat Boners & Slicers & Slaughterers	1
Mixed Crop & Livestock Farmers		Sales Assistants (General)		Aged & Disabled Carers	
Crop Farmers		Meat Boners & Slicers & Slaughterers	1	Packers	3
Meat Boners & Slicers & Slaughterers	2	Meat, Poultry & Seafood Process Workers	2		

Source: ABS, 2017

Age structure

Broadly speaking the age structure of the three study sites echoes the age structure of the whole of South Australia and the capital city Adelaide with some subtle but important differences. Firstly, there is a higher proportion of young people under the age of 20 in the Limestone Coast LGAs than in the rest of the state or Adelaide. At the other end of the age structure, a higher proportion of the regional populations are aged 60 and over, with the highest proportion of people aged 60-79 in Murray Bridge (20.6 %), suggesting it is a retirement destination. At the same time, the proportion of people aged 20-39 is lower in the regional zones than in the rest of the state, and especially Adelaide, reflecting the outmigration of young people from rural and regional areas to the city for study and employment.

Table 8: Population age structure, study site LGAs, Greater Adelaide*, South Australia, 2016

Age range	Naracoorte/ Lucindale (n=8,292)	Tatiara (n=6,620)	Murray Bridge (n=20,862)	Greater Adelaide (n=1,295,712)	South Australia (n=1,676,653)
			%	%	%
<20	24.9	25.2	23.5	23.6	23.5
20 - 39	23.2	21.9	25.0	27.1	25.6
40 - 59	27.2	27.8	25.8	26.4	26.6
60 - 79	19.6	19.7	20.6	18.1	19.4
80+	5.0	5.4	5.1	4.9	5.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: ABS, 2017 (Note: all Census data from ABS, 2017d unless stated otherwise)

*Greater Adelaide is the area defined by the ABS as a Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) and represents the functional extent of the capital city of Adelaide.



Overseas-born population

There has been tremendous growth in the Overseas-born population in the selected regional study sites (Table 9). In the Limestone Coast, massive growth occurred in Naracoorte and Lucindale and Tatiara with 89.4 and 46.7 percent growth between 2006 and 2016, respectively. This occurred against the background of very small or negative growth of the total population in these locations. Murray Bridge saw a 71.3 percent increase in the Overseas-born population between 2006 and 2016, as well as healthier growth in the total population (18.2 %).

Table 9: Total and Overseas-born population, study site LGAs, 2006, 2011 & 2016

	2006	2011	2016	% change 2006 - 2016
Naracoorte and Lucindale				
Total population	8,082	8,115	8,291	2.6
Overseas-born population	595	870	1,127	89.4
OS-born as % of total population	7.4	10.7	13.6	
Tatiara				
Total population	6,865	6,554	6,620	-3.6
Overseas-born population	452	662	663	46.7
OS-born as % of total population	6.6	10.1	10.0	
Murray Bridge (RC)				
Total population	17,648	19,742	20,862	18.2
Overseas-born population	1,775	2,382	3,041	71.3
OS-born as % of total population	10.1	12.1	14.6	

Source: ABS, 2017

The following tables of the top ten countries of birth of the Overseas-born population in the study site LGAs reveal fascinating detail about migration trends to regional South Australia, though a caveat is required about low population counts in ABS data. These data are randomly adjusted to minimize the risk of identifying individuals in aggregate datasets, and no reliance should be placed on small cells or related percentage calculations. That said, there is still much to be learnt about the Overseas-born in the study sites. Overall, in South Australia there has been a clear shift over the past two decades in the source countries of migrants to the state, with noticeable declines in the number of migrants from traditional, mostly European source countries and a substantial increase in migrants from new source countries across Asia (Wasserman et al. 2019).

Interestingly, the top ten countries of birth of the Overseas-born population are different in each regional study site, although the broader state-level trend of a shift in source countries is evident in each of them. In all study sites, for example, the number of people born in traditional migrant source countries like England, Scotland, Germany, Netherlands and New Zealand has declined, although England-born migrants remain one of the largest migrant groups in each. In Naracoorte and Lucindale, and Tatiara, Afghanistan and Philippines-born migrants now also comprise large groups and, respectively, represent migrants from the Humanitarian and Skill Migration Programs. Other increasingly important source countries in the Limestone Coast are Pakistan-born in Naracoorte and Lucindale and Sri Lanka-born in Tatiara. Growth in China-born migrants has been more significant in Murray Bridge than the Limestone Coast LGAs. There has also been substantial growth in the Taiwan and India-born populations in Murray Bridge.

Table 10: Top 10 countries of birth for Overseas-born population, Naracoorte and Lucindale LGA, intercensal change and recently arrived, 2011 and 2016 censuses

	2011	2016	Change 2011-2016	Arrived 2006-2015*	Arrived 2006-2015 (%)
	n	n	%	n	%
Afghanistan	125	221	76.8	200	90.5
England	191	178	-6.8	21	11.8
New Zealand	148	142	-4.1	71	50.0
China	33	33	0.0	20	60.6
Scotland	35	31	-11.4	4	12.9
South Korea	23	31	34.8	16	51.6
Laos	24	30	25.0	4	13.3
Thailand	19	30	57.9	9	30.0

Source: ABS, 2017

*Indicates arrival in Australia. Migrants may have lived elsewhere prior to moving regionally.

Table 11: Top 10 countries of birth for Overseas-born population, Tatiara LGA, intercensal change and recently arrived, 2011 and 2016 censuses

	2011	2016	Change 2011-2016	Arrived 2006-2015*	Arrived 2006-2015 (%)
	n	n	%	n	%
Philippines	30	102	240.0	80	78.4
England	191	99	-48.2	16	16.2
Afghanistan	11	89	709.1	75	84.3
New Zealand	148	71	-52.0	34	47.9
China	33	22	-33.3	11	50.0
Germany	32	21	-34.4	3	14.3
Sri Lanka	3	21	600.0	23	109.5
Netherlands	23	20	-13.0	0	0.0
South Africa	12	18	50.0	3	16.7
Scotland	35	14	-60.0	0	0.0

Source: ABS, 2017

*Indicates arrival in Australia. Migrants may have lived elsewhere prior to moving regionally.

Table 12: Top 10 countries of birth for Overseas-born population, Murray Bridge LGA, intercensal change and recently arrived, 2011 and 2016 censuses

	2011	2016	Change 2011-2016	Arrived 2006-2015*	Arrived 2006-2015 (%)
	n	n	%	n	%
England	590	569	-3.6	25	4.4
Philippines	132	398	201.5	329	82.7
China	236	312	32.2	252	80.8
New Zealand	230	239	3.9	115	48.1
Taiwan	36	187	419.4	127	67.9
Vietnam	27	139	414.8	105	75.5
Italy	126	126	0.0	4	3.2
India	80	124	55.0	111	89.5
Netherlands	105	92	-12.4	9	9.8
Germany	97	79	-18.6	6	7.6

Source: ABS, 2017

*Indicates arrival in Australia. Migrants may have lived elsewhere prior to moving regionally.



Section 3: Discussion

The migrants who participated in the focus groups and consultations were generally positive about where they were living, either in Naracoorte, Bordertown or Murray Bridge. In all locations, most migrants reported that they liked living where they were, that their families were happy and that they felt they belonged. Migrants with school-aged children also reported they were happy with the schools, and an overwhelming majority enjoyed the rural environment as opposed to the city one. There was less positive consensus among participants about their experiences of services, healthcare, housing, and employment. These results are discussed in more detail below.

Future plans

It is well understood that attracting migrants to regional areas is only half the issue, with retention an equally, if not more important part of the puzzle (Hugo et al. 2006; Miles et al. 2006; Wickramaarachchi and Butt 2014; Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008). The academic literature shows that retention depends not just on access to jobs, affordable housing, education and services, but on migrants' social connectedness and their levels of satisfaction with lifestyle, facilitating migrants' integration into the community (Hugo 2008; Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008).

An important question in this study therefore was whether migrants want to stay permanently in the regional towns they are currently living in. In Murray Bridge, most Chinese participants reported a desire to stay permanently in Murray Bridge (10 people). Of those who didn't (3), one reason given was the "demanding" nature of work at the town's main employer. Participants from the mixed migrant table were more evenly split so that six wanted to stay, four did not and one was unsure. The latter indicated a desire to travel more to see different places. All Congolese participants in Murray Bridge wanted to stay in the town permanently because it was cheaper to live there, but still close to Adelaide. This highlights a rather unique feature of Murray Bridge – its proximity to a capital city at just one hour driving time.

In Naracoorte, migrants across all participating ethnic groups were more divided as to whether they would like to stay permanently. In the mixed focus-group six migrants indicated they would like to, while the remaining six didn't rule out staying, but said they were 'not sure', for reasons including perceptions of better job opportunities in Adelaide and because the migrants' children wanted to move away from the area. Among Afghan participants, more indicated they would like to stay permanently (5) than wouldn't (3). Again, reasons for not wanting to stay related to children and the difficulties they have accessing tertiary education from Naracoorte.

All the Samoan and Fijian participants said they would like to stay in Naracoorte permanently rather than the two years stipulated by their visa. They were attracted to job opportunities and the chance this gave them to save money, as well as the peaceful

environment of the small town. On the other hand, the majority of the 16 Chinese participants in Naracoorte (14) said they would not like to stay, citing a lack of services and facilities, lack of residential or small land, poor channels of communication with local services, small range of culturally appropriate food and other goods in the market, and general isolation.

Across the study sites, migrants in Naracoorte generally raised more issues and appeared to be less settled than their counterparts in Murray Bridge. While the data did not provide an explicit explanation for this, it is worth considering how the following factors can contribute to migrants' levels of satisfaction in regional locations.

- Distance from a major city – Murray Bridge is within easy commuting distance of the capital city, including by public transport, expanding migrants' opportunities to access employment, education, services, shopping, entertainment, and ethnic and other community connections. At 3.5 hours from Adelaide, city benefits such as these are less accessible to migrants in Naracoorte who may be disadvantaged or feel more isolated as a result. Although Mt Gambier is an hour away, it is an inconvenience to seek essential services by travelling to the town.
- Size of the town (population) – Directly affects the number and type of social, civic, sporting, cultural and other activities a town can support, and therefore opportunities for migrants to engage with the community. However, previous research (in Murray Bridge) has shown that migrants' participation in activities and engagement with the broader community is limited, with most engagement taking place through English classes and religious organizations (Barrie et al. 2017).
- History of international migrant settlement – Determines how established the existing infrastructure is for supporting migrants (government and non-government organizations), how accustomed businesses are to employing migrants (visa system know-how etc.), and the extent of migrant networks which provide critical settlement support for new arrivals.

Other conditions known to impact migrants' ability to settle successfully are a lack of opportunities for younger people to undertake traineeships and apprenticeships to gain work due to English proficiency issues and lack of employer networks, as well as a paucity of skilled jobs. Many of the available jobs are very low skilled and in the meat works. However, it is important to note that although the possible explanations for lower levels of satisfaction above are supported anecdotally and by previous research, they do not arise directly as evidence from the community consultations run immediately prior to this summary report.

Welcoming city

A very clear finding in both study locations was that migrants generally felt welcomed by their local communities and reported a strong sense of belonging, although it was noted by one focus group that life can still be difficult if you are not from Australia. For Afghan participants in Naracoorte, discussions about feeling welcomed and belonging centered on the fact that Australia is now their home. For Chinese migrants in Naracoorte, although they felt the community was welcoming, they reported that they had not developed a strong sense of belonging because family did not live with them and, for temporary migrants, because it was perceived as being difficult to buy a house.

On the other hand, temporary migrants in Naracoorte from Samoa and Fiji said they felt very welcome and that they belonged, based on positive interactions with people they worked with and the broader community. These migrants commented on the diversity of people that lived and worked in Naracoorte, which contributed to their sense of feeling part of that community.

In Murray Bridge, most migrants felt the local community was welcoming, although one migrant noted that it depends on the group or organisation they are engaging with. Apart from the Congolese participants who all reported that they felt they belong in Murray Bridge, there was less certainty among other groups about whether they belonged. Chinese migrants in Murray Bridge also raised several reasons why they did not feel they belong, including: uncertainty posed by provisional visa status, language barriers, lack of opportunity for social networking, long working hours and job insecurity.

Some migrants reported that they felt a sense of belonging in Murray Bridge because they socialised within their own ethnic/cultural groups in the town. This reflects the findings of an earlier study which found a tendency for migrants to stay within their own close-knit ethnic/cultural groups (Barrie et al. 2017). This practice was viewed as, "...a positive start for migrants, providing a safe and comfortable place for them nested within the broader community..." and a "first step to wider integration" (Barrie et al. 2017, p. 23-24).

Certainly, supportive local governments play an important role in welcoming migrants. Thereafter critical support is provided by in situ MRCs, and migrant participants in all towns commented on the importance of these to assist them to address their settlement transition and connect with the broader community.

The good life

Migrants participating in this study were asked to indicate what they find good about living and working in their regional town by agreeing or disagreeing with the statements listed in Table 13. If most participants in a focus group agreed with the statement a tick (✓) has been included in the columns. If they disagreed, the statement is marked with a cross (✗), a wave line (~) indicates the group was evenly split.

Across both towns the feature of living in a regional town that all groups agreed on was that they enjoyed the local environment, especially the peace and quiet, and the relative safety of a small town. This was also the opinion of those consulted in Bordertown. Migrants in Murray Bridge also mentioned that they enjoyed living next to the Murray River and they enjoyed the weather. Migrants at both sites liked that their towns were small, making it easy and convenient to get around. One migrant commented positively on the lack of traffic lights. These findings are critical for local governments, businesses and other groups, who can focus on marketing the environmental attributes and unique regional characteristics of their town to potential movers.

Table 13: Response to statements about living and working in Naracoorte and Murray Bridge, focus group participants

	Naracoorte (4 groups)	Murray Bridge (3 groups)
Services are good	✓✓~✓	X✓✓
Employment (better job opportunities)	X n/a X✓	✓XXX
Welcoming city	✓✓X✓	✓✓✓
I like where I live	✓✓X✓	✓✓✓
Family is happy	✓✓X n/a	✓✓✓
I feel like I belong	✓✓X✓	✓X✓
My children are happy at school	n/a ✓✓ n/a	✓✓✓
I like the local environment	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Cost of living is good	✓XXX✓	✓✓✓
Healthcare is good	X~X✓	✓X✓
There is suitable housing (availability/affordability)	XXXX	✓✓✓

Source: AMRC community consultations, Naracoorte and Murray Bridge

Where applicable, all groups agree that their children were happy at school. This suggests that regional towns are getting the education that they do offer right, although solutions need to be found to satisfy the demand for vocational and tertiary education in regional areas. Lastly, as we’ve already seen, many migrants also enjoyed the welcoming nature of their towns. Murray Bridge migrants described their local community as “friendly” and “good”. In Naracoorte, the local community was “friendly” and “good”, and the people were “nice”.

Issues and challenges

An important aim of this study was to canvas the issues and challenges that migrants face living and working in regional South Australia. To that end, migrant participants were asked questions not just about what they like about living in Murray Bridge and Naracoorte, but also about the issues and challenges they face, and the parts of regional living they would like to see improved. The findings are discussed below, including input from consultations in Bordertown.

Employment

Research has shown the primary reason international migrants settle in regional areas of Australia is to take advantage of the opportunities for employment that exist there (Feist et al. 2014; Hugo et al. 2006; McDonald et al. 2008). That is not to say, however, that migrants automatically find work in these locations or that their experience of work is without complications. Certainly, migrants in this study identified several employment-related issues.

In Naracoorte, many participants were employed full-time (35 of 54), and all worked in jobs at either the meat processing factory or in vineyards. However, a major issue raised was the seasonal nature of vineyard work, which only provides 3-4 months’ work a year. As a result, all Afghan participants were unemployed at the time of the focus groups. Several unemployed participants said they were looking for work but could not find a suitable job. One participant had a disability which prevented them from working, and another two were retired. For women across a range of ethnic groups, family responsibilities had so far kept them out of the workforce.

Both men and women working in the local meat processing factory expressed concern with contracting arrangements that did not provide them with long-term employment certainty or a number of industrial rights. The newest overseas temporary visa recruits commented on unfair contract arrangements, especially rental costs and isolated housing that they felt had not been properly explained prior to their employment.

Migrants in the Murray Bridge focus groups were employed in a broader range of jobs with a variety of employers, though most were still employed by either the meat processing factory or on large commercial farms (for example, mushroom and pork farms). Other occupations included taxi driver, truck driver and plumber. One participant worked as a volunteer for community service projects. More migrants in Murray Bridge were employed on a part-time or casual basis and more were unemployed than in Naracoorte due to the temporary closure of TFI (the largest employer in town) due to fire damage. Several of the unemployed migrants were very recent arrivals from Congo, having only been in Murray Bridge for one month or less.

Other unemployed participants in Murray Bridge tended to be either retired, studying or temporarily out of the workforce while caring for young children. At least three participants were actively looking for work, two of whom were registered with a local employment agency and one of whom had applied at the major employers and was awaiting a response.

All migrants involved in the Murray Bridge focus groups stated that they had experienced issues relating to employment, included difficulty finding work, a lack of choice of employers (and the predominance of manual labour work), a lack of small to middle-sized businesses to work in, and discrimination. Several Chinese migrants felt they had been discriminated against by employers because of their age. That is, that they were too old to work. Others felt that specific industries such as retail, aged care and childcare did not want to employ Chinese people.

Congolese participants in Murray Bridge reported it was hard to find work and recounted their own and the experiences of other families known to them who had looked for work for “years” but were yet to be employed. This group described their experiences with one local employer they felt is prejudiced towards job hunters from their ethnic group. Despite this, as has been noted elsewhere in the report, these migrants still all felt welcome and hope to stay in Murray Bridge.

Services (health, transport and education)

In all three locations, issues with three main services stood out. These were healthcare, public transport and education. In Murray Bridge, besides the Congolese participants who did not feel there was a lack of services, all other migrants identified a general lack of services but particularly a lack of public transport. It was understood that this pertains to difficulties travelling within Murray Bridge and to local places of employment, rather than to Adelaide which can be accessed by a regular bus service. A lack of public transport was also raised as an issue by migrants in Naracoorte and Bordertown.

Healthcare was raised by one group in Murray Bridge as a service that could generally be improved. The same group felt that while access to services was acceptable, their efficiency was generally low, although no further information was given. Migrants in Naracoorte identified the quality of service received by Centrelink as intermittent. Healthcare was a bigger issue for migrants in Naracoorte. Indeed, both the Afghan and Chinese migrants groups identified healthcare as a priority issue, citing the major issues as: long waiting times for General Practitioners (GPs) (up to two weeks), the need to travel long distances to see specialist doctors, and a small hospital unable to meet the communities’ needs.

As well as the need for more doctors generally, Afghan participants highlighted the need for more female doctors to treat their community. Certainly, it is widely accepted that recruiting medical professionals to rural and regional Australia can be difficult, with this complicated and lengthy process highlighted during CSCS meetings in Bordertown.

For migrants with children at school in Murray Bridge and Naracoorte, most reported their children were happy at these schools. Just three participants in Naracoorte said their children were not happy, but did not explain why. In Bordertown, migrant children were reportedly happy and integrating well into the school, although a teacher shortage had been exacerbated by new migrant enrolments.

The lack of options for tertiary education was recognized as an issue by migrants in all locations with concerns raised about the lack of TAFE and university options. Indeed, Bordertown migrants highlighted the loss of technical training options resulting from a change in Naracoorte TAFE operations, meaning these migrants would likely need to relocate to Adelaide for training. In fact, migrants in Naracoorte and Bordertown indicated that they may move to Adelaide or Melbourne when the time came for their children to attend university. Most migrants in one focus group in Murray Bridge stated it was difficult to travel to Adelaide for tertiary education, although Congolese migrants in Murray Bridge approached the transition for their children from Year 12 to University (presumably in a capital city) as an inevitability.

Housing

Overall, more migrants in Murray Bridge owned their own home with a mortgage than were renting. Of the renters, most indicated that they would one day like to buy a house in Murray Bridge. Reasons for this included that they enjoyed living in a regional area and the availability of cheap housing. It is difficult to infer more detail from the data about who the ‘buyers’ and who the ‘renters’ are.

The Chinese migrants in Murray Bridge had lived there much longer than their Congolese counterparts and most of the Chinese migrant participants own their homes with a mortgage. By comparison, all of the Congolese participants were renting. This is not a surprise given that six of the eight Congolese participants had lived in Murray Bridge for less than one year. It is interesting, however, that the two participants who had lived there for close to ten years were also still renting. Still, all the Congolese participants said they were interested in buying a house in Murray Bridge. Just one participant in the Murray Bridge focus groups was living in government housing.

The housing landscape for migrants in Naracoorte was quite different with most migrants renting rather than owning their own homes, and many more in shared accommodation. Among the non-homeowners in Naracoorte, most were private renters (23), while six were living in community housing. Common grievances among renters was that rent is too high and there is limited rental housing stock. Nevertheless, only some of the renters expressed an aspiration to buy a house in Naracoorte. Reasons for wanting to do so included taking advantage of housing affordability and using the house as an investment. On the other hand, some migrants thought they could find cheaper housing in Adelaide or wanted to buy in Adelaide because of nearby educational opportunities for their children.

The lack of housing stock was identified as a major issue in Naracoorte and Bordertown at CSCS meetings throughout 2019. This was seen to adversely impact migrants seeking suitable, affordable housing, particularly where reunited families require accommodation for more people. Moreover, a lack of housing increases the likelihood of migrants having to live in overcrowded, low quality or poorly located housing (outside town, for example). In CSCS meetings in Naracoorte and Bordertown during 2019, regional employers, too, raised the lack of housing as a major issue jeopardizing the recruitment and retention of a stable migrant workforce when housing cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, employers report reduced productivity resulting from employee absences when they take leave to visit family who are unable to find accommodation in the town.

It could be argued that migrants and refugees often enter regional housing markets, epitomized by low supply and high competition, already disadvantaged by having low incomes and savings, and having insufficient knowledge or local contacts to find appropriate and affordable housing (Zang and Hassan 1996). They can be also be subject to discrimination from private landlords and public housing agencies (Zang and Hassan 1996). Indeed, CSCS meetings in Naracoorte and Bordertown noted migrants in these towns have been subject to discrimination in the housing sector on either ethnic or cultural/religious grounds. However, an encouraging development noted in a recent CSCS meeting in Bordertown is the change in attitude of some local landlords previously reluctant to rent accommodation to migrant workers, while stakeholders in Naracoorte recognized the need to educate landlords there.

Temporary migrants from Fiji and Samoa were living in share accommodation arranged by their employment contractor while still in their home country. Housing issues for this group related to negotiations with their employment contractor. For example, some of these migrants had signed contracts before they left their home country and agreed to pay a certain amount of rent. Upon arriving in Australia, they were asked to sign new contracts in which the price of rent had almost doubled. Indeed, some migrants indicated their rent was too high relative to income, suggesting a proportion are experiencing rental stress.

Others felt the information they had been given about housing was incorrect. For example, they had been told that housing beyond the limits of the town was cheaper, but they hadn't found this to be true. This combination of issues is likely to be unique to the Fijian and Samoan communities who make up a large proportion of the migrants in South Australia on these specific temporary work visas (subclass 403). Their participation in this study offers a very important early glimpse into the experiences of this group who otherwise tend to go under the radar, often living and working on the same site for the duration of their relatively short-term visa. However, further research would be needed to identify the true scale and severity of the issues uncovered anecdotally in this study.

The academic literature has identified a number of barriers to refugees accessing suitable housing, including: social isolation; a lack of social and financial capital; the absence of relevant work experience; lack of a driver's license and access to personal transport; limited English language skills; lack of knowledge in dealing with public and private sectors; financial hardship; discrimination by real estate agents and landlords; cultural barriers, especially for female headed, extended or large families; lack of suitable housing options; and lack of familiarity with Australian housing and legal systems (Atem 2009; Beer and Foley 2003; Olliff 2014; Settlement Council of Australia 2017). These challenges can adversely impact integration and migrant health (Atem 2009). Previous research in South Australia has shown the important role housing plays in both the physical and mental health of refugees and asylum seekers, with improved housing, affordability and security leading to more positive health outcomes (Ziersch et al. 2017).

Priority issues

Significantly, migrants were asked to describe the 'priority issues' where they live; the things they would most like to see improved. These are listed in Table 14 in no order. Some of these issues have already been discussed, such as a lack of tertiary education which was raised in all three towns. Likewise, housing was listed as a priority issue in both Limestone Coast locations.



Table 14: Priority issues to be improved in their town, focus group participants

Naracoorte	Murray Bridge	Bordertown
Healthcare	Transport	Housing
Training and education	Cleanliness	Lack of English classes
Lack of community activities	Employment (job opportunities)	Lack of tertiary education
Communication with council	Lack of tertiary education	Limited settlement services
Access to migration agents and lawyers	Governance (Local and State government not representative)	
Housing (high rent)	Access to grants	
Limited settlement services	Family day care	
Lack of English classes	Limited small businesses opportunities	
	Lack of mental healthcare	
	Lack of English language classes	
	Service inefficiency	
	Limited settlement services	

Source: AMRC community consultations, Naracoorte, Bordertown and Murray Bridge

A major issue common to all three study sites is a lack of access to English classes through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), a federally funded program providing up to 510 hours of free English language lessons to eligible migrants and humanitarian settlers. Instead, in Naracoorte and Bordertown English classes are coordinated by the local MRC and taught by retired former teachers on a voluntary basis. Classes are attended by migrants, mostly women, with little or no English, for up to two hours per week. Although they offer an opportunity for migrants to engage and learn, this low intensity of teaching is inadequate for migrants to reach a level of proficiency beyond basic conversational English and is seldom sufficient for migrants to meet citizenship requirements or go on to further training or education. In the past year, limited AMEP classes have been available in Murray Bridge, but not enough hours for migrants to learn English to a level consistent with their metropolitan migrant counterparts. Most migrants in Murray Bridge still rely on weekly, volunteer-run classes coordinated by the local MRC. Many are temporary visa holders or residents without citizenship and weekly classes are not enough to achieve a level of proficiency for migrants to give migrants the best chance to settle successfully.

Stakeholders in Naracoorte CSCS meetings identified language as a critical issue affecting all migrants' ability to upskill and find employment, particularly since there have been no AMEP classes in the town since December 2016. Furthermore, some found the lack of Accredited English courses (i.e. AMEP) directly undermined the citizenship process for migrants in rural and regional areas outside "TAFE centres" such as Mount Gambier. A related issue raised in Naracoorte CSCS is the wisdom of requiring TESL accredited teachers to teach migrants with low levels of English, a restrictive requirement in rural and regional Australia where there is a low supply of TESL-qualified teachers.

Another priority issue is the need for settlement services, widely recognized by migrant participants in all three towns. For example, it was recently noted by migrant participants in a CSCS meeting in Naracoorte that emerging migrant communities are looking for additional support from the local MRC office. Indeed, CSCS meetings provide an important, regular discourse on settlement matters at a local level. Previous research in the Limestone Coast has shown this type of community forum, engaging migrants and stakeholders to work together, is an effective way to coordinate support and identify and address settlement issues (Feist et al. 2014). Approaching settlement in such a "holistic", "whole-of-community" way has been viewed as the best chance for migrants to achieve positive outcomes (Barrie et al. 2017), but settlement planning necessarily also requires coordination between State and Federal government.

A variety of other priority issues were raised by migrants including a lack of community activities in Naracoorte and, in Murray Bridge, a lack of representation in local and State-level government. In fact, different cultural groups presented with different backgrounds in terms of their migration background, visa type, age, gender and settlement experience. These experiences influenced their opinions on access and equity in terms of future needs and aspirations. For example, as well as wanting to see employment issues addressed, Congolese migrants in Murray Bridge raised the issue of the cost of childcare and a lack of family day care options. Chinese migrants in both Naracoorte and Murray Bridge lamented the lack of community activities in their town to foster cross-cultural interaction. Prioritizing English language classes was a universal issue.

Women; social isolation, health and well-being

An important finding in this study related to the experiences of women participants in both Naracoorte and Murray Bridge and their self-reported English language ability. In Naracoorte, of the 23 women who participated seven spoke no English and 11 spoke “little” English. The remaining five women reported they spoke “good” English. Of concern is that the majority of women with little or no English were either Australian citizens or permanent residents (18), meaning that although Australia is now their home, a lack of English will limit opportunities for employment and to engage with the broader community.

In Murray Bridge, too, eight of the 17 female participants reported they spoke little or no English. One woman's husband was in detention, highlighting the additional and immense personal challenges refugee and humanitarian migrants face. MRC staff in Bordertown also report low levels of English (very little or no English) among women who were recent arrivals.

Participants in the Migrant and Refugee Women's Forum 2019, hosted by the AMRC and Council of Migrant and Refugee Woman of SA (CMRW), identified language limitations as the number one barrier to participation in Australia. Women said they lacked confidence communicating in English, including many with some English language skills who were not confident with pronunciation or using and understanding slang words. Women explained the problems this caused finding employment and accessing services (Prattis and Tsoulis 2019). Key recommendations in the report from this forum aimed to support English language education and training for migrant and refugee women, including a recommendation to “Provide free and flexible English language classes supported by free child care, and including equal access for women living in regional areas” (Prattis and Tsoulis 2019, p. 7). Indeed, as discussed previously, there remains an urgent need for more opportunities for migrants to learn English.

Another issue for women raised in this study was social isolation, a known issue for migrant and refugee women for whom limited opportunities to join in work and the wider community can impact health and well-being (Northcote et al. 2006). Often, lack of English language is a major contributing factor to social isolation, while other barriers to participating in work and the wider community, and affecting women living both in cities and regionally, are discrimination; cultural barriers; employment, qualifications and work experience; family and domestic violence; and financial limitations (Prattis and Tsoulis 2019). Several female participants in this study described how family responsibilities had so far kept them out of the workforce, limiting wider engagement. Meanwhile, the migrant women citing childcare as a priority issue demonstrate the ways in which women are strategizing to balance family and work.

Unfortunately, a lack of mental health services, also highlighted by participants in this study, leaves women with inadequate support to deal with these issues. Likewise, migrants raised the need for more GPs in regional locations, and the need for more female doctors for cultural reasons. These findings reflect issues raised by women in the Migrant and Refugee Women's Forum, which found that generally there is a lack of understanding among GPs on issues such as torture and trauma. These women also reported a lack of adequate support for women with mental health issues, summarized by one participant who said, “Integrating is difficult when you're suffering mental health issues” (Prattis and Tsoulis 2019, p. 12).

Young people and education

While a broad range of voices were heard at the consultations from migrants aged from 18 to 74 years old, the younger age ranges were well-represented with 23 under-35s in Naracoorte and 11 under-35s in Murray Bridge. As secondary data showed, there was a higher proportion of young people under the age of 20 in the Limestone Coast LGAs than in the rest of the state or Adelaide, and therefore there is a critical need to ensure the right social, educational and employment opportunities exist for this group, and enough of them.

Issues raised by young migrants mostly related to the lack of opportunities for furthering education either through technical and vocational studies at TAFE or tertiary studies at university. A lack of TAFEs, universities and training providers was also identified as a significant challenge and barrier to employment by migrant and refugee youth participating in the 2018 “Leading for our Future” Youth Symposium, hosted by the AMRC and Commissioner for Children and Young people. Youth from rural and regional Australia were well represented at the event which found broad barriers to employment included: lack of qualifications and experience; English language and communication issues; racism and discrimination; lack of support; lack of local networks; and cultural differences. Young people living in rural and regional South Australia were further challenged by limited employment opportunities due to fewer businesses/employers and a lack of transport making it difficult to attend interviews, training etc. Participants also reported their experience that Australia-born people living in rural and regional areas are more prejudiced than those living in cities (AMRC 2018).

To address these issues, young people from rural and regional areas made a number of suggestions, including specific incentives for employers in rural and regional areas to employ migrant and refugee young people, specialized employment readiness programs developed with local employers, and improved access to employment pathway training programs outside cities (AMRC 2018). Other opportunities to assist young people in the country were subsidized driver training programs and affordable access to transport (AMRC 2018).

Conclusion

This study updates our understanding of migrants' experiences of living and working in three well-established migrant destinations in regional South Australia. It provides insights based both on secondary quantitative data, and secondary qualitative data drawing from earlier work by the Australian Migrant Resource Centre. The insights should be seen as illustrative of the priority issues raised by the people who face them. In general, it would be fair to say that not enough is known about the settlement pathways followed by migrants, or the full nature of the challenges that they face. There is a demonstrable need for further research in this area, but future work would usefully be guided by the insights generated by this study.

Migrants generally feel positive about their experiences in Naracoorte, Bordertown and Murray Bridge – they report feeling welcomed and having a strong sense of belonging. Many participants in the AMRC's public consultations showed strength and a determination to 'make a go' of their lives in regional Australia. Nevertheless, there are some stand-out issues common to regional migrants across the South Australian study sites relating to employment, housing, and access to tertiary education, English language classes and support services. These initial qualitative insights indicate that there is almost certainly a need for effectively resourcing settlement transition in order to facilitate the building of capacity, and to link and engage communities with broader services and community activities. This is particularly important given that migrant populations are diverse, and are likely to increase both in size and in diversity.

Although most migrants move to regional areas for jobs, that does not necessarily mean that the process of securing work is easy, or that working lives are straightforward. As the collated AMRC consultations show, employment and jobs remain a major issue for migrants confounded by the seasonal nature of work in the country and a lack of variety of workplaces. Furthermore, migrants are often limited to low-skilled jobs requiring a high degree of manual labour. Participants reported that finding work was generally difficult, with discrimination reported as a barrier to employment in some cases. In other cases, women's roles and responsibilities within the family constrained their ability to work, with few external supports in place to help them achieve their employment aspirations.

Another challenge for participants was finding suitable accommodation with some regional areas experiencing a lack of suitable housing stock, resulting in issues of affordability and problems arising when sole tenants' rental requirements changed following family reunion. These are important insights with few studies to date examining migrants' experiences of housing in regional Australia, making this an important area for future research.

This study also shows that regional housing shortages probably adversely impact employers' ability to build a stable, sustainable, workforce over the long-term. Connections such as this between issues of housing and employment exemplify the intersecting nature of settlement issues in regional locations. Yet, it is clear that further work will be needed in order to quantify the economic and productivity consequences of these complex barriers.

Lastly, the AMRC consultations highlighted migrants' general lack of access to services in their regional areas, including transport and healthcare. In terms of retention, lack of access to tertiary education is a critical issue for regional towns which lose young people, and often their families with them, when it comes time to go to university. For migrants themselves, securing access to English classes is a priority issue that must be addressed if migrants are to fulfill their potential; participating and contributing socially and economically in their communities. In particular, women in this study had low levels of English proficiency, or no English, and require access to many more hours formal English tuition through the AMEP than they currently receive in order that they might transition to further education and/or employment, access services more readily and ease social isolation. Increased and properly resourced settlement support services in the study sites will also assist migrants to achieve more positive settlement outcomes.

Previous research has suggested that communities must work together to create good settlement experiences for migrants (Barrie et al. 2017), and this update has highlighted key areas where these 'holistic', approaches might be applied. Regional towns including those in this study are all unique with their own blend of issues specific to them. At the same time, as this study has shown, there are a range of issues that are common to regional locations and which intersect and affect one another. This complexity requires a coordinated approach involving all levels of government to harmonize the different structural and policy settings and ensure the best chance of settlement success.

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