



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



# Humanitarian Settlement Services

Regional Profile #12  
Coffs Harbour, New South Wales

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DSS wishes to express its thanks to Anglicare North Coast for compiling this material.

While every care has been taken, DSS makes no guarantees that the information provided is up to date.

For further information on the Humanitarian Settlement Services programme see:  
**Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)**

## About Coffs Harbour

The North coast of NSW is divided into two areas – the Mid North Coast and the Northern Rivers. Coffs Harbour is part of the Mid North Coast region and is the major settlement location for new arrivals, with smaller numbers settling in Lismore in the north and Taree in the south. Coffs Harbour is approximately six hours' drive north from Sydney and five and a half hours' drive south from Brisbane.



## Service providers

Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) services provided in the region focus on helping refugees to gain access to mainstream services such as Centrelink, Medicare, banks, general and specialist health and medical services, English language tuition, training and employment, in addition to links to the community and community organisations.

Anglicare North Coast is the service provider delivering services on behalf of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and has been providing community services to the NSW North Coast for over 12 years. These include:

- migrant services – Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) & Complex Case Support
- financial counselling
- community housing
- homelessness support
- disaster recovery
- mental health support.

Anglicare North Coast has offices in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Maclean.

## Accommodation

Anglicare North Coast provides both short term and long term accommodation for HSS clients. Clients are given short term accommodation on arrival and then given help to transition to long term accommodation.

### Short term accommodation

Anglicare uses three and four bedroom houses close to shops and services in the Coffs Harbour Central Business District (CBD), as well as a block of two bedroom apartments in the seaside suburb of Park Beach.

### Long term accommodation

The Average rent in Coffs Harbour is \$250 per week and the city has a good rental vacancy rate of 3.2 per cent compared to other Australian cities. In comparison, Sydney, for example, has a vacancy rate of just 1 per cent.

The following are examples of rental properties (as at September 2012) close to Coffs Harbour CBD.

- three bedroom villa \$380 per week
- two bedroom villa \$240 per week
- two bedroom unit \$200 per week
- five bedroom house \$485 per week
- one bedroom unit \$170 per week
- two bedroom unit \$240 per week

### Examples of accommodation



**Three bedroom villa**



**Two bedroom villa**



**Two bedroom unit**



**Five bedroom house**



**One bedroom unit**



**Two bedroom unit**

### Share Accommodation

Coffs Harbour has a healthy share house accommodation market due to international students and interstate tradesmen working on the local highway upgrade. The approximate costs of share housing (as at September 2012) are:

- Share three bedroom house \$150 per week
- Share three bedroom house \$120 per week



**Example of a share house with three bedrooms**

Coffs Harbour has a number of supportive real estate agencies that follow best practice in managing rental properties.

## Education

Coffs Harbour has seven preschools, 12 primary schools, six high schools (and one senior school for Years 11 and 12) and three tertiary institutions (TAFE, ETC, Southern Cross University).

The following intensive English classes are offered to children and young people:

- Coffs Harbour Primary School, Orara High School and Coffs Harbour High School all have intensive English classes for new arrivals.
- independent school Bishop Druitt College (kindergarten to Year 12) runs an intensive English class for new arrivals in their primary school. The college also has a generous academic scholarship programme for eligible new arrivals.
- Coffs Harbour Christian Community School (kindergarten to Year 12) offers discounted academic fees for eligible new arrivals
- Coffs Harbour also has an active Steiner education school for children from kindergarten to Year 6 in Coffs Harbour CBD.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) classes are provided by North Coast TAFE in Coffs Harbour. All levels of student ability are catered for from pre-literate to advanced students going on to tertiary study. Students can enrol and complete a Certificate in Spoken and Written English.

Students also have access to the following English language programmes as part of TAFE's broader programme:

- Certificate I, II, III in Spoken and Written English
- English for Further Study
- ESOL (Access)
- Foundations for Vocational and Further Study
- Language Literacy and Numeracy
- Preparation for Vocational and Further Study
- Tertiary Preparation
- Volunteer English Language Tutoring.

Over 150 students are currently completing a TAFE Certificate in Spoken and Written English.



**"Little TAFE" Glenreagh Street - AMEP location in Coffs Harbour CBD**



**Coffs Harbour Education Campus**

North Coast TAFE also provides the following services to support students' success:

- vocational counselling
- library, internet and Student Association resources
- sporting and gym facilities
- bilingual support teachers (Burmese)
- work experience programmes
- settlement classes (life skills).

## Health Services

The Coffs Harbour Health Campus (CHHC) is located five minutes' drive from Coffs Harbour CBD. The CHHC includes primary health services and specialist health services such as:

- a 208 bed hospital with a 24 emergency service
- maternity
- paediatric
- surgical
- oncology
- orthopaedic units.

It also incorporates allied health services such as mental health, oral care and family wellness.

The campus also includes a new specialist centre, helicopter airfield, rehabilitation centre and a host of day clinics designed to assist in the ongoing treatment and management of chronic disease, such as the chest clinic which operates from the hospital.

There are approximately 20 general practice (GP) clinics and one women's health centre within the Coffs Harbour area and 90 per cent of practices will bulk bill for clients on government benefits.

Seven of the local GP clinics are large clinics with more than six practitioners. These practices have nurses and allied health workers and offer services such as immunisations, general wellness checks, prenatal / postnatal care and chronic disease management. The GP to population ratio for the Mid North Coast is 1:1107, slightly lower than the national figure of 1:1113.



**Coffs Harbour Base Hospital**



**Coffs Harbour Specialist Centre**

There are 34 psychologists registered with Medicare to provide services in Coffs Harbour. A number of registered psychologists in Coffs Harbour specialise in dealing with torture and trauma and grief and loss. The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) has an office in Coffs Harbour where they have two female counsellors available by appointment.

## Employment Opportunities

The top three industries employing people in Coffs Harbour in 2006 were:

- retail
- health care and social assistance
- accommodation and food services (hospitality)

Coffs Harbour is a renowned blueberry, strawberry, raspberry and banana producing area. There are a number of farms harvesting berries from August to February each year. Costa Exchange is the largest producer of berries in Australia and their biggest operation is at Corindi, 30 minutes north of Coffs Harbour.



Costa Exchange is a large employer of refugees in the Coffs Harbour region. Work includes picking / harvesting, pruning, farm operations and support services. Applying for work with Costa Exchange is supported by settlement agencies (Anglicare & North Coast Settlement Service) and Job Services Australia agencies throughout Coffs Harbour. In-home childcare is available for new entrant residents to support 'blueberry employment'. Transport is by private car pool.

There are a number of innovative measures to support new arrivals in gaining employment. The following are some examples:

### **Horticulture**

At the peak of the berry harvesting and pruning season July to February, the mid north coast employs over 2000 people. To support workers seeking long term careers in this industry, TAFE runs certificate courses in horticulture designed in partnership with local employers.

### **Health**

Students have been using the Certificate III in Aged Care work to transition to nursing at Southern Cross University. Several university graduates from a humanitarian background have gone on to full time work in mainstream nursing.

### **Teaching**

Coffs Harbour currently recruits, trains and employs a number of bi-cultural teaching aides to work one-on-one with new arrival children in all three levels of school (pre, primary and secondary). The training is supported by the NSW Department of Education and can lead to 'recognition of prior learning' within the Bachelor of Education programme at Southern Cross University.

### **Interpreting**

Coffs Harbour has a large Centrelink call centre and four interpreter services employ accredited and non-accredited bilingual workers in language support and as professional interpreters. Health Care Interpreters, for example, is based in Newcastle and recruits, trains and employs interpreters working in Coffs Harbour to support the local hospital and allied health sector.

Generally, employment options favoured by new arrivals are:

- education
- childcare
- interpreting
- retail
- hospitality
- horticulture
- community services.

Pathways include work experience programmes and employer partnered short courses through TAFE Outreach.

There are no refugee specific labour market programmes or specialist Job Services Australia agencies in Coffs Harbour working exclusively with newly arrived humanitarian entrants. Instead all agencies have been encouraged to develop the skills required to work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.



## A welcoming community

The CALD community is well developed in Coffs Harbour. There are a number of community organisations welcoming new arrivals and building the capacity of their ethnic and religious groups.

The Coffs Harbour Islamic Association facilitates Friday prayers, welcomes and supports Muslim residents from the local region and others transiting through the mid north coast. The association has a diverse range of members from medical residents practicing at Coffs Harbour hospital, local business owners to new arrivals from a humanitarian background.

The Dhammaduta Buddhist Association was established in Coffs Harbour in 2006 and has a temple in Coffs Harbour. The association was founded with the support of refugees from Myanmar.

The Coffs Harbour Baptist Church runs Chin language services every week.

St Johns Anglican Church has commissioned their first Sudanese counsellor and hosts an actively welcoming congregation of Sudanese Australians from a humanitarian background.

Other registered associations are:

- Myanmar Association of Coffs Harbour
- Islamic Association of Coffs Harbour
- Coffs Harbour Southern Sudanese Association
- Coffs Harbour Ethiopian Association
- Eritrean Association of Coffs Harbour
- Afghan Association of Coffs Harbour.

Broader community organisations supporting new arrivals include:

- Coffs Harbour Rotary, offering two academic scholarships per year for young people from a humanitarian background
- Coffs Harbour Business Women's Association offering mentoring support
- Coffs Harbour Zonta Club offering mentoring support.
- Red Cross – facilitate a supported playgroup for women and children from a humanitarian background in Coffs Harbour twice a week.

Other services:

- Department of Human Services (Centrelink and Medicare) offer offsite registration services for new arrivals from a humanitarian background. Initial registration takes place in Anglicare offices where new arrivals feel secure and comfortable.
- North Coast Settlement Service supports clients through the Settlement Grant activities after their exit from HSS services. They are introduced in a joint graduation ceremony where Australia school graduates are awarded certificates of achievement and introduced to other support services.
- Coffs Harbour City Council supports Refugee Week and Harmony Day celebrations for the Coffs Harbour community.
- local sporting clubs offer scholarships to new arrival humanitarian entrants, sponsored by Multicultural NSW.