



Case Study 1: Enabling Rural Migrant Settlement: A Case Study of the Limestone Coast

Dr Helen Feist, Dr George tan, Dr Kelly McDougal and Professor Graeme Hugo

Introduction

This case study sought to achieve a better understanding of the role local government can play in the successful settlement of new migrants in rural and regional South Australia, and involved the experiences of migrants settled and working with Teys Australia at Naracoorte and JBS Australia at Bordertown, along with other employers.

The study was undertaken in 2014 and included interviews with migrants living and working in the Limestone coast, their employers, other key community stakeholders and Local Government representatives.

The Case Study was documented by researchers from the University of Adelaide, and the project was a partnership of the following agencies:

- the Migrant Resource Centre, South Australia
- the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre,
- University of Adelaide
- the City of Mount Gambier
- the Rural City of Grant
- the Naracoorte-Lucindale District Council
- the Tatiara District Council.

Relevance of this Case Study

While the focus of this study was on the role of Local Government, the preparation and resettlement experiences were documented in detail and very relevant to the current AMPC/MINTRAC/TFI project. In particular the study covered:

- learning about living in the region
- the role of family and friendship networks in settlement and integration
- perceptions of community attitudes towards new migrants
- the role of key stakeholders in supporting integration
- the role of local services in enabling migrant settlement
- housing
- employment – finding, barriers, language, transportation, exploitation, future mobility.

Some of the key messages/learnings from this Case Study

Knowledge of the region

Most of the migrants in the study knew little about the region before arrival – they had received general information about Australia and had been given some brochures about the region. The study highlighted the importance of on-arrival case management services that included reception, case management, accommodation and orientation.

Role of family and friendship networks

It was evident that integration was much easier for those groups who migrated as whole families and cultural groups. In addition those who migrated as whole families were likely to stay longer.

Community attitudes towards new migrants

Developing a common understanding of cultures and groups within the wider community was acknowledged as both important and difficult to develop.

Key stakeholders supporting integration

Community events such as Harmony Day were described as valuable in developing cultural understanding, but schools, the Migrant Resource Centre, sports events and churches, as well as supportive councils were also seen as critical. Migrants who participated in Community groups also appeared to settle and integrate more quickly.

The role of local services

English language capability was described as a key barrier to effectively accessing health services, Centrelink, employment services, schools etc. Another barrier to access was transportation.

Housing

A large number of the migrants in this Case Study were not part of an HSS program and as a result finding suitable housing was an issue. This is probably not such an issue for the current project, since housing support is offered as part of the program, and there appears to be sufficient suitable accommodation available in Murray Bridge.

Employment

In this Case Study over half of the migrants interviewed were working in the meat works, and one of the most common issues was that people who were skilled in their home countries were employed in unskilled positions.

However, meat works were acknowledged as working hard to retain employees.

English language proficiency was a major issue, with both access to suitable classes and the adequacy of the allocated 510 hours questioned.

Access to transportation to and from work was an issue.

Informal interaction offered by employers through workplace events etc were valued by interviewees.

Issues around community perceptions of whether migrants were filling unmet labour requirements or being used as 'cheap labour' were mentioned several times in this study, and such perceptions are relevant to the current project, and will need to be well managed.