

THEORY OF CHANGE

Pathfinder – Refugee Settlement

How this Pathfinder opportunity is expected to reduce settlement-era barriers and build belonging for refugees, humanitarian entrants and recently arrived migrant families by making water safety a routine part of early settlement support.



**Multicultural
Community Water
Safety Program**

THE CHANGE LOGIC

If Royal Life Saving Society - Australia works with settlement and humanitarian services, aquatic providers and community partners to embed subsidised, culturally safe water safety activity into existing settlement pathways,

- then newly arrived families will be more likely to receive trusted information, gain early access to aquatic learning, build confidence and practical skills, and form safer connections to local pools and waterways.
 - Over time, this should help shift water safety from an optional extra to a routine, trusted part of settlement support,
 - while building a tested local model that can be sustained, adapted and scaled.

THE PROBLEM

Refugees, humanitarian entrants and recently arrived migrants often face heightened drowning risk during settlement. This comes from layered barriers — limited familiarity with local waterways, lower swimming and water safety skills, language barriers, cost pressures and broader settlement demands. The challenge is also systemic: water safety is not always embedded in settlement pathways, so families can miss critical early opportunities to build knowledge, confidence and connection while learning to navigate other essential parts of life in Australia.

ACTIVITY ACROSS THE FOUR PILLARS

WE CONNECT

Referral pathways from case managers into aquatic programs, partnership-building between settlement agencies and aquatic venues, orientation pool visits and family swim days.

WE WELCOME

Culturally safe and trauma-informed delivery, gender-sensitive options, bilingual support, family-centred participation models and easier-to-navigate venue practices.

WE PROMOTE

Multilingual materials on local hazards, settlement-based water safety orientation modules, and trusted communication through caseworkers and community leaders.

WE LEARN

Fully or heavily subsidised learn-to-swim and water safety lesson blocks, pool familiarisation, family sessions and progression toward agreed benchmarks.

OUTCOME PATHWAY

→ SHORT TERM

Earlier reach into newly arrived families through trusted settlement pathways; better hazard awareness; increased confidence to participate; reduced first-entry barriers.

→ MEDIUM TERM

Improved swimming and water safety capability; more routine referral pathways from settlement services; stronger culturally safe, trauma-informed local practice.

→ LONG TERM

Reduced drowning risk for refugees and recently arrived migrants; stronger social cohesion and belonging; a tested, transferable model for settlement-linked water safety.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

- Early settlement is a critical window for practical safety learning and habit formation
- People engage more readily when water safety is introduced through trusted existing services rather than left to chance
- A small number of well-supported pilots can generate useful learning about feasibility, outcomes and conditions for scale