

# Building Pathways:

## Training in Supporting Transitions for Young People from Refugee Backgrounds

building  
pathways

### An introduction to the *Building Pathways* *Framework*

The following resources were developed by a working group of the Victorian Settlement Planning Committee, which included experienced practitioners and policy officers from across government and the non-government sectors.

#### **Rationale:**

Transition points represent critical opportunities and key stressors in most young people's lives. As the *Good Practice Principles: Guide for Working with Refugee Young People* (VSPC 2005) sets out, the unique intersection of challenges faced by young people from refugee backgrounds – coping with adolescence, settlement and their traumatic past – mean that they can find it particularly difficult to make successful transitions. In addition, the diversity of experience amongst refugee settlers requires creative support that looks beyond the assumptions of linear mainstream pathways.

#### **Aims:**

*Building Pathways: A Framework to Support Transitions for Young People from Refugees Backgrounds* aims to improve the sensitivity and responsiveness of support provided to refugee young people moving through education, training and employment by building on the three core values of the *Good Practice Principles*: Understanding; Trust; and Social Justice and Access. It describes practical approaches to implementing these core values at two levels: 'What you can do' as transition workers; and 'What the relevant sectors can do', including program managers and policy makers.

The text of the *Building Pathways Framework* is provided in the following materials or downloaded in colour at: [www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/transitions.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/transitions.htm)

# An introduction to the *Building Pathways Training Materials*

These workshop materials outline five workshops for introducing and working through the issues and practices in the *Building Pathways Framework*.

The target audience for the workshops is those working with young people from refugee backgrounds as they move in or out of education, training and employment settings.

The materials for each workshop include:

- a session plan
- participant worksheets
- a marking guide with suggested responses to worksheets
- suggested slides/overheads to accompany workshops

The session plans are set out with learning objectives, a list of resources and a recommended time line that can be altered as facilitators see fit. The session plans have detailed facilitator notes including key issues for consideration. There are headings in bold to highlight the topic or key points for aspects of the session.

All sessions have:

- a welcome
- a reflection activity
- a focus activity on support resources and information
- group work including sharing, reflecting on work practice and developing strategies

## The Workshops

The workshops explore three core values and six themes set out in the *Building Pathways Framework*.

### **Workshop 1:**

Value: Understanding

*Theme: Consider the impact of the refugee experience*

### **Workshop 2**

Value: Understanding

*Theme: Build on young people's ambitions*

### **Workshop 3**

Value: Understanding

*Theme: Support the role of family and community*

### **Workshop 4**

Value: Trust

*Theme: Foster trust in a new setting / Ensure continuity of support between settings*

### **Workshop 5**

Value: Social justice and access

*Theme: Take responsibility for equitable outcomes*

## Choosing workshops

Some audiences may be experienced in working with young people from refugee backgrounds and have a good knowledge of the refugee experience. In this instance, any particular workshop that suits the needs of the group can be run as a one off, as all are designed to be conducted independently.

If the audience has limited exposure to working with young people from refugee backgrounds then it is highly recommended that the group begins with **Workshop 1: Consider the impact of refugee experience**. This workshop is fundamental to understanding the range of experiences that may be impacting on a young person as they negotiate transitions through education settings.

## A note to facilitators: before you begin....

**Prepare suggested resources and readings** well before the workshops begin. Facilitators should become familiar with these documents and decide which ones they would like to use or have available for participants

**Ensure you set up a working agreement** with participants that what is shared in the workshops stays in the workshop. Confidentiality is paramount to developing trust with young people and peers. Ask participants if they are willing to agree to respecting confidentiality before the workshops begin.

**Prepare for possible disclosures** that may come when discussing refugee background issues. This may occur amongst participants in workshops as it often can when working with young people from refugee backgrounds. It is important to affirm a person's bravery for sharing experiences, and important to acknowledge that they are not alone and that others have also had those experiences. Always leave an opening to allow the person to discuss the issue further, either through you or to someone you can refer them to. The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture is an appropriate place to refer those who are dealing with traumatic experiences relating to their refugee background (contact details at <http://www.foundationhouse.org.au>).

## Introductory resources

Included with this introduction are:

- the text of the *Building Pathways Framework*, which you may like to extract for any additional materials that you may develop. This material is provided on the grounds that recognition will be given to their source (*Building Pathways Framework*, VSPC 2007); and
- a set of Introductory slides developed by Foundation House that provide background information on young people from refugee backgrounds and referred to in a number of workshop session plans.

## **Building Pathways: A Framework to Support Transitions for Young People from Refugee Backgrounds**

Transition points represent critical opportunities and key stressors in most young people's lives. As the ***Good Practice Principles: Guide for Working with Refugee Young People*** (VSPC 2005) sets out, the unique intersection of challenges faced by young people from refugee backgrounds – coping with adolescence, settlement and their traumatic past – mean that they can find it particularly difficult to make successful transitions. In addition, the diversity of experience amongst refugees requires creative support that looks beyond the assumptions of linear mainstream pathways.

This framework aims to improve the sensitivity and responsiveness of support provided to young people from refugee backgrounds moving through education, training and employment by building on the three core values of the *Good Practice Principles*: Understanding; Trust; and Social Justice and Access. It describes practical approaches to implementing these core values at two levels: 'What you can do' as transition workers; and 'What the relevant sectors can do', including program managers and policy makers.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

Understanding involves making an active attempt to learn about what is important to a young person from a refugee background, what their life experiences mean to them and what they would like to do with their life.

#### **Consider the impact of the refugee experience**

The capacity of young people from refugee backgrounds to make decisions and manage the pressures of transition is impacted on by their refugee experience, cultural adjustment and the practical demands of settlement.

##### **What you can do**

- Identify and accommodate the personal factors impacting on the transition experience of young people.
- Be aware that the process of change, for some young people, may exacerbate other personal and emotional issues related to their refugee experience.
- Facilitate opportunities, such as discussion groups, for young people to address their fears and concerns.
- Keep up to date with information about what is happening in the young person's country of origin.

##### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Share information between services and education providers regarding new learnings, changing demographics and research findings.

Arriving in Australia aged 18 with his 23 year old brother, Abdul was enthusiastic about continuing his education, which has been disrupted by civil war when he was in Year 9 at secondary school in his country of origin. Abdul had lost most of his family, fled to a refugee camp and witnessed traumatic events. As a result of these experiences, he found it hard to trust adults, lacked confidence and had frequent headaches and nightmares.

Abdul wanted to study with other young people, so he joined an ESL class at the TAFE close to his flat. He studied English and vocational subjects in a program that also supported his settlement needs. His teacher recognised that Abdul's irregular attendance and difficulties relating to other students was connected to his refugee experience. His teacher referred Abdul to a trauma counsellor and a recreation program to.

With the support he received to deal with his post-traumatic stress, Abdul got a full time position at Safeway, being promoted to a supervisor after 10 months. He was then accepted to train as a security guard. He worked at the Commonwealth Games and is now working in security at an office building in the city.

## **Build on young people's ambitions**

Young people from refugee backgrounds may have ambitions for educational success without the necessary understanding of career planning and education pathway options.

### **What you can do**

- Affirm a young person's capacity to make decisions about their future.
- Encourage young people to be guided by their interests and ambitions to set realistic goals.
- Support young people to make decisions about education and training pathways, taking into consideration their educational preparedness, personal circumstances and family's expectations.

### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Provide a variety of flexible pathway options, including both mainstream and specialist alternatives.
- Promote the use of peer education to increase young people's understanding and support their decision making.

Fozia was 19 years old when she arrived in Melbourne, after two years in a refugee camp in Kenya. She had received no formal education prior to arrival in Australia and was not literate in her own language. She had a career goal of becoming a nurse.

After 6 months in her Adult Migrant English Program class, she joined a specialised, low level ESL literacy class, which also addressed settlement needs and provided emotional support for young adult migrants. Fozia progressed to a higher level ESL class after a year, maintaining her enthusiasm for learning and willingness to study independently.

Fozia's careers adviser encouraged her to pursue her goal of working in the health industry and helped her plan a career pathway beginning with an Aged Care certificate. Fozia is now working in an aged care facility but also knows that she has the option to undertake further study towards becoming a nurse in the future.

## **Support the role of family and community**

As part of a community still establishing itself in Australia, family and community play a critical role in the educational choices of young people from refugee backgrounds and may have high expectations of their young people, but with little understanding of the education, training and employment systems.

### **What you can do**

- Assist families to understand the important role their support can play in a young person's education.
- Provide information to families and communities regarding the education system, career planning and pathway options, in their preferred language.
- Where appropriate, involve families in the development of young people's career planning and pathway options.

### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Adopt practices to engage young people that are inclusive of their parents and families.

Salim and his son arrived in Australia after 18 months in a refugee camp. Salim's son had completed Year 10 in their home country, excelling in maths. Salim hoped that his son would become a doctor.

When Salim's son began studying English, his English Language School (ELS) rang to invite Salim to a series of parent information sessions, which were supported by bilingual staff. Then, when his son started at the local secondary school, Salim attended more information sessions. With the help of an interpreter Salim discussed with a small group of parents and teachers the differences between the Australian education system and the one in his country of origin. Parents also discussed their concerns and how they understood their role in their children's education.

These culturally sensitive sessions made Salim feel confident about approaching staff at the school and participating in other school activities.

## **TRUST**

Young people from refugee backgrounds have experienced traumatic circumstances before arriving in Australia, in which they have felt vulnerable and experienced loss. It is therefore imperative to build trust from a young person's first contact with a new setting through the provision of a welcoming and safe environment.

### **Foster trust in a new setting**

Education, training and employment settings create an environment that engenders and reinforces trust.

### **What you can do**

- Be aware of appropriate greetings, behaviour and physical environments for the age, gender, religion and culture of young people and their families.
- Provide a familiar point of contact who can build a relationship of trust with a young person and their family in the setting.
- Foster the social connectedness of young people from refugee backgrounds with peers in their new setting through one-to-one or group activities.

### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Recognise the need to resource social connectedness in delivering education and training programs.

Atong was 16 years old when she arrived in Australia after 4 years in the Kakuma refugee camp having had no formal education.

A month before finishing her study at an English Language School (ELS), Atong was involved in a transition program in which teachers from the local secondary school talked to the exiting students about the new school environment and matched her with a student 'buddy' from the secondary school.

After meeting her buddy at the ELS, Atong spent a day with her exploring the secondary school and sitting in class. On Atong's next visit to the school, she received her uniform, books and locker key.

Atong started at the secondary school in a special ESL Bridging Program for some classes and was with her buddy in others. For the first 6 months, Atong met with her buddy once a week to plan and participate in activities together. Atong felt this helped her to make new friends and feel comfortable in the new school environment.

### **Ensure continuity of support between settings**

Provide continuity of support that recognises the vulnerability of trust for young people from refugee backgrounds.

#### **What you can do**

- If a young person leaves your service, support them to ensure they are introduced to and made familiar with another appropriate service.
- Assist young people to maintain contact with their 'last point of trust', even if they have transited out of that particular service.

#### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Build capacity and flexibility in program guidelines for case-management across settings.
- Explore alternate models that allow funding to follow an individual young person.
- Establish regional coordination that encourages collaborative planning across mainstream and specialist providers to support young people from refugee backgrounds.

Ikram came to Australia as a 16 year old, having experienced war, loss of her family and dislocation to a refugee camp in a neighbouring country.

After completing her English study and Year 10, Ikram struggled to complete Year 11. With the help of her school's careers adviser, Ikram developed a pathway to becoming a social worker. As well as helping her enrol in an ESL course at her local TAFE, Ikram's adviser ensured that she contacted the pathways support worker at the TAFE. With support from the careers counsellor at TAFE, Ikram has completed a Community Services certificate.

Ikram moved to a different campus for her Diploma, but still calls her careers counsellor when she has problems that she cannot resolve, such as paying her course fees on time or finding suitable work experience. Her counsellor is linking her to appropriate support at her new campus.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACCESS

Young people from refugee backgrounds have the right to fully participate in mainstream society. Education, training and employment settings should enable these young people to achieve equitable outcomes and assist them to achieve their full potential.

### **Take responsibility for equitable outcomes**

Young people from refugee backgrounds have a right to meaningful education and training that takes into account their refugee experiences and educational preparedness in supporting them to achieve equitable educational outcomes.

#### **What you can do**

- Maintain dialogue between settings to enable appropriate information sharing and monitoring of a young person's progress.
- Take a holistic perspective of a young person's situation and ensure they are linked into broader service networks in order to respond to their particular needs.

#### **What the relevant sectors can do**

- Create mechanisms to understand how young people are faring in different settings.
- Provide flexible learning alternatives, particularly in relation to eligibility requirements and responsiveness to individual needs.

The 'Transition to Senior Secondary School' programs at Cleeland and Debney Park Secondary Colleges were developed in response to the interrupted schooling of many newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds. These programs are a partnership between the schools and the Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) to deliver the VCAL Foundation curriculum. The programs respond to some newly arrived families preference for young people to study in a structured school environment with their peers.

The programs feature parent information sessions in first language, where possible, and school visits preceding enrolment. Students are accompanied to the Secondary Colleges by AMES staff and their progress is continually monitored.

The ongoing bilingual support and pastoral care offered in this model, contribute to the very high retention rate of these vulnerable young people. All students are assisted with realistic pathways to further education, employment or vocational training, which may include extending their time in senior secondary school.

Slide 1

## Who is a Refugee?

- **A refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."**

*The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*



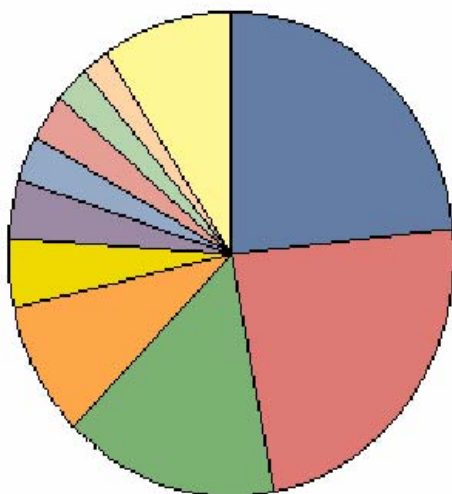
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UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/taxis/vtx/basics>

School's In for Refugees  
[www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au)

Slide 2

## Top ten countries of birth for refugees settling in Victoria (January – September 2006)



Burma (Myanmar)	23.4%
Iraq	23.4%
Sudan	15.6%
Thailand	9.0%
Ethiopia	4.6%
Afghanistan	4.1%
Tanzania	3.1%
Iran	2.0%
Other Southern and East Africa	2.5%
Invalid	2.0%
Others	0.3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source DIMIA (to be cited)

[www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au)

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Slide 3

## Settlement patterns - humanitarian youth arrivals in 2004 – 2005 (1117)

<b>Greater Dandy</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>Hobsons Bay</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
<b>Brimbank</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>Yarra</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Hume</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>Whittlesea</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Maribyrnong</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>Moonee Valley</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2.7%</b>
<b>Casey</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>Whitehorse</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
<b>Darebin</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>Moreland</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
<b>Maroondah</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>Monash</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Wyndham</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3.4%</b>			

CMYI 2004/05

## Refugee experiences of violence

- attacks on villages
- witnessing of death and mass murder
- rape, torture, imprisonment
- attempts at ethnic cleansing
- bombing, burning and clearing land
- disappearances
- perilous flight or escape
- forced conscription
- unsanitary conditions, lack of access to health care
- separation from family, teachers, peers and the broader community
- deprivation of education and opportunity to play for children
- denial of basic essentials

## Resettlement issues for refugee students and their families

- New language
- Cultural norms
- School system
- Housing, finances
- Visa entitlements
- Repaying loans
- Clothing, furniture



- Health, Transport system
- Split families, Missing loved ones
- New freedoms for teenagers
- Changing gender roles and family roles
- Ongoing trauma reaction

Slide 6

**HealthWize**  
Health Literacy Teaching Resource for Refugee and Other ESL Students

Produced by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

**Taking Action**  
Human Rights and Refugee Issues Teaching Resource

Produced by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

**School's In for Refugees**  
Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness

Produced by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

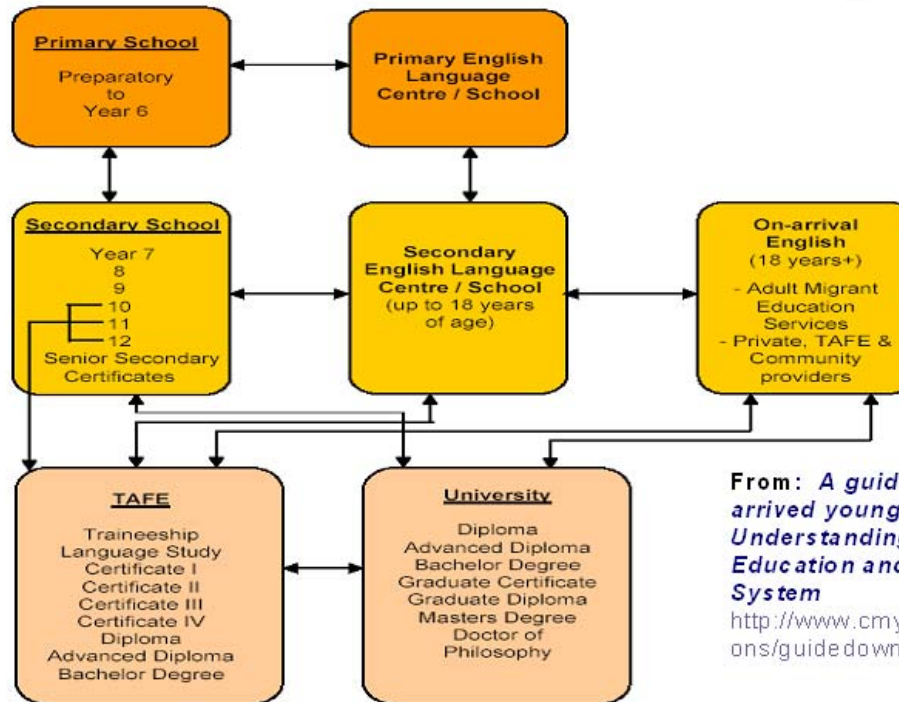
**The Rainbow Program for Children in Refugee Families**  
A collaborative, school-based program to support refugee children and their families

Produced by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

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# The Victorian Education System

## The Victorian Education System



From: *A guide for newly arrived young people: Understanding the Victorian Education and Training System*  
<http://www.cmyi.net.au/publications/guide/downloads.html>

Slide 10

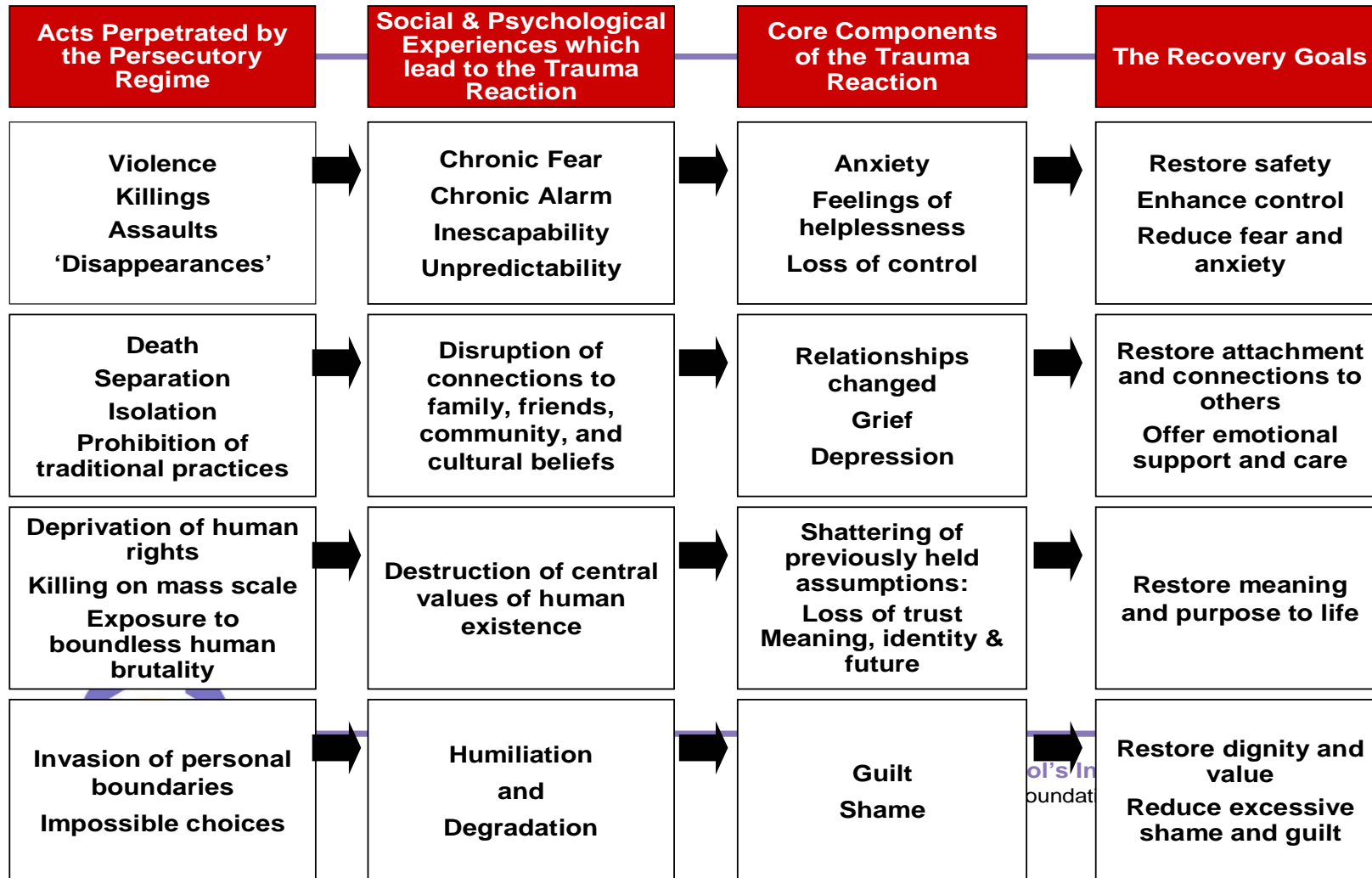
## Slide 8

### SUMMARY OF IMPACT OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA ON THE FAMILY

1. *Roles within the family and responsibilities are often dramatically altered.*
2. *Traumatised parents often have their capacity for emotionally supporting and protecting their children reduced.*
3. *Extreme disturbances in parents such as violence become new traumas for family members.*
4. *Financial difficulties and generational conflict produce extra burdens on all family members.*
5. *Traumatisation for the family continues with bad news from country of origin. People from the same country of origin can be perceived as a threat.*
6. *Dislocation from culture and tradition and the language barriers add enormous pressure.*
7. *Children are often taught not to trust anyone.*
8. *Guilt associated with leaving family behind disrupts emotional recovery for all family members.*



## A Framework for Recovery



**Settlement factors that may exacerbate and maintain the trauma reaction once in Australia**

**New humiliations**

**Devaluing of person in a new culture**

**Unfamiliar environment**

**Injustices**

**Fear about the future and not coping**

**Exposure to ignorance and lack of understanding**

**Continuing separation**

**Loss of belonging in new dominant culture**

**Racial prejudice**

**— Ongoing danger in new country —**