

the *Nhill* effect

...a positive story of resettlement and mutual benefit

Although most Australians are sympathetic towards the plight of people seeking safety in our country, some express a fear of these newcomers 'taking our jobs'.

Certainly, unemployment is an issue in many large centres around the nation, but many rural towns are suffering from a dwindling population.

This was the case for Nhill – a small town in western Victoria – until the general manager of local business *Luv a Duck* took the initiative to attract permanent workers and their families to his business and the town. He approached members of the Karen community who had fled from Myanmar and invited them to visit and meet leaders in the Nhill community.

From the original 5 people who moved to Nhill, more of the Karen community followed. Between 2010 and 2015, 160 people had taken up residence in the town, bringing 54 workers to *Love a Duck* and 35 new students to the school. Having lived in rural Burma and then refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border, life in a country town appealed to the Karen and the people of Nhill embraced and mentored the newcomers. Strong leadership from both the host and settling communities resulted in successful cultural integration.

In 2015 a report published by Deloitte Access Economics and the AMES settlement agency said the initiative has added more than **\$40 million** and **70 jobs** to the local economy. A Hindmarsh Shire chief executive said " You put the economic analysis side-by-side with the tremendous social impact and then you've got an outstanding example for all small communities in Australia".



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