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Images of the ever intensifying quagmire of the Syrian conflict flicker occasionally across our screens. Bombings, gunfire, rubble, refugees.

The scale of the humanitarian disaster and its impact on families, children, businesses and communities also flickers by as we get on with our lives. For the Syrians, a population the size of Australia, things will never be the same again.

They have been conscripted, displaced, terrorised, traumatised, murdered and enslaved. Life expectancy is now 55. Before the conflict it was 75. 270,000 people have died - more than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs combined. More than 11 million have been forced from their homes. Unemployment is 60 per cent.

The lucky ones - about four million - have escaped, mostly with just the clothes on their back, carrying a suitcase if they are fortunate, undertaking journeys defying belief across the border. The even luckier - about 10 per cent of those who have got to Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan - are eligible for resettlement in developed nations like Australia.

They are just like us. Doctors, nurses, accountants, teachers, construction workers, farmers, engineers, entrepreneurs. They are just like us.

An Australian business delegation recently visited refugee camps and community centres in Lebanon and southern Turkey as part of the *Friendly Nation Initiative*. The aim was to see firsthand what Syrian refugees had been through and what they needed. What we saw and heard was both shocking and uplifting.

The delegation included a range of business leaders led by the well known business figure Tony Shepherd, determined to see the situation first hand and to lead the business community in assisting those Syrians who are resettled in Australia.

Some of those we spoke to will potentially be among the 12,000 Syrian refugees Australia can expect to take over the next few years. That special additional intake will naturally be supplemented by more Syrians who are accepted under our regular humanitarian intake.

Given the scale of the humanitarian crisis it could well be that we need to take in more. Of the 460,000 refugees eligible for settlement, developed nations have to now pledged to take about 160,000.

Those who come to Australia have been vetted by the United Nation High Commission for Refugees and then selected after vetting by Australian immigration authorities. Single people, those with family members in Syria, those with questionable records need not apply. Those who can apply are assessed in part on how they can contribute to Australia's economic well-being for generations to come.

The Australian business community knows it has a key role in helping this resettlement process. We need to find jobs, training or if necessary requalification for those who arrive so they can make their way as quickly as possible.

What we heard in the camps was that the displaced Syrians naturally want to go home. They now realise that is impossible when their cities have been reduced to rubble, the conflict could go on for years and the rebuilding could take decades.

These people overwhelmingly want peace and stability, they want an education for their children and they want a job to find economic opportunities and to make a contribution to their new community.

This is not some political campaign by business leaders. It is recognition that we can play a role to help blameless people get back on their feet and contribute to our nation. We have been overwhelmed by the positive response to our initiative by leaders of Australian businesses, large and small, who have pledged to work with government and resettlement agencies to give these people a chance if possible.

Those of us who made the journey to the camps to see things first hand were struck by the optimism of the people we talked to.

One conversation among many stands out. It was with a highly qualified English speaking nurse looking to migrate to Australia with her professional husband and two children. All she wanted after four years of seeing their savings evaporate was the chance to start again and be a productive and giving part of a peaceful community.

I would have that same wish too if I had seen my mother's throat slit in front of my children and me by Isis members who had kicked in the front door looking to execute my spouse who happened not to be home. She fled then and there with her husband, children and not much else. Now she wants a fresh start.

It was conversation full of hope and optimism. She and thousands of others need a job to deliver on that hope and optimism. Business recognises it has a role to play in that delivery and is increasingly ready to step up to the plate.

It was not a conversation that will simply flicker by. It was a conversation that will stay with all of us who were there forever.