

Out of Africa

Togolese refugees to call Ballarat home

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The families will be brought to Australia from a refugee camp in neighbouring country, Ghana.

The announcement yesterday by chairman of the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, George Fong, follows a decision late last month by the City of Ballarat to approve the city's participation in the Federal Government's migrant settlement program.

In the early 1990s about 300,000 Togolese were displaced after clashes between security forces and opponents of then leader, Gnassingbe Eyadema.

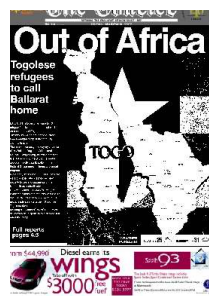
Renewed violence in 2005 following Mr Eyadema's death and the installation of his son, Faure Gnassingbe, as the country's new president saw a further 40,000 flee Togo's borders.

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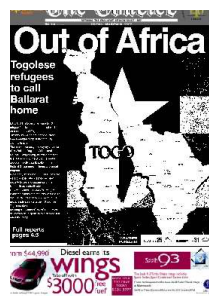
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City to become new home for 10 families

Togolese to arrive by month's end: Fong

By Nick Higgins

THE first of 10 Togolese families could arrive in Ballarat by late next month.

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council chairman George Fong said he had been advised the families had been processed by the Federal Government and issued with visas.

Mr Fong said the United Nations had placed the refugees into three categories: those able to return to Togo, those able to remain in the country to which they had fled and those who should be resettled in another country.

"In the case of the Togolese in the Krisan Camp in Ghana, the first two options are out," Mr Fong said.

"Many of these families have spent upwards of 10 years in the camps. Some of the families have children who have never seen life outside a refugee camp.

"Our understanding is that the families that have been identified by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship have a variety of backgrounds. We understand that they are likely to be French-

speaking although the native language is Ewe and it is possible they will speak both.

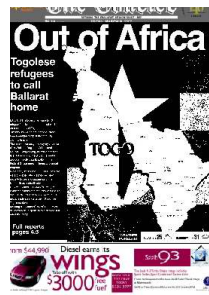
"Many of them have some form of training, although they may not necessarily have completed that training.

"They are nuclear families so with a mother, father and children of between one and five in number and aged from infancy to 17, 18-years-old.

"We understand all those families have been processed by the Australian Federal Government and the remaining process includes the Central Highlands Regional Settlement Planning Committee finishing off a comprehensive series of checklists."

Mr Fong said the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council had been chosen by Federal Government agency Australian Multicultural Education Services to bring the refugees to Australia and the final details of this contract were still being finalised.

Ballarat Mayor David Vendy said the city had always been a caring and compassionate city.



NEW HOME: Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council chairman George Fong announced 10 families from Togo will make their home in Ballarat. Picture: **Lachlan Bence**

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