

# REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### CALL FOR INCREASE IN SIZE OF HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

Australia's peak refugee agency, the Refugee Council of Australia has called on the government to increase the size of the offshore humanitarian program and to increase the number of refugees coming within the program.

The call has come as part of a series of recommendations presented to the Minister for Immigration, Amanda Vanstone, in the Council's annual Intake Submission which covers:

- \* the role of refugee resettlement in the international context and at how Australia can make a constructive response to this;
- \* the size and composition of the 2004-05 Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program; and
- \* the management and operation of the humanitarian program.

In the submission, the Refugee Council presents detailed arguments to support the following recommendations:

- \* the offshore humanitarian program be increased by 1,100 places to 14,000;
- \* the refugee component of the program be increased from 4,000 to 7,000 places, with 15% set aside specifically for women at risk cases;
- \* the program numbers be determined independently of any consideration of the numbers of refugees granted protection visas in Australia;
- \* all offshore refugee entrants be granted permanent visas and be able to gain access to all settlement services;
- \* greater provision be made for people displaced within their own country; and
- \* the program make provision for a contingency reserve of 3,000 places to enable Australia to respond to emergency situations without taking places away from other worthy refugees.

Further, while the Council supports the shift in the program towards entrants from Africa, it cautions that the shift not be too large. There are many other

parts of the world, in particular the Middle East, where instability continues and the pressing need for resettlement remains.

For further information or to obtain a copy of the Council's submission, contact  
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