

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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MEDIA RELEASE

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REFUGEE COUNCIL WELCOMES COMMITMENT TO REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN FEDERAL BUDGET

The Refugee Council of Australia welcomes the announcement in last night's Federal Budget that an additional \$267.6 million over 4 years will be devoted to deliver an increased humanitarian program and to expand settlement services.

"This shows a real level of commitment by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Gary Hardgrave, to providing world-leading services to refugees and humanitarian entrants" said David Bitel, RCOA President. "As the humanitarian program shifts more and more towards entrants from Africa, most of whom have experienced extreme trauma and deprivation over many years, it is right and proper that the programs adapt to meet their additional settlement needs," he continued.

The increased allocation comes on top of a previously announced increase in the size of the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program. Significantly, it targets many of the areas for which the Refugee Council has been calling for additional support. We commend, in particular:

- * the allocation of funds to meet the costs of pre-departure medical checks;
- * the commitment to create a no-interest loan scheme to assist humanitarian entrants pay for their travel to Australia;
- * the provision of additional support to humanitarian entrants;
- * the increased funding that will allow young (16-24) humanitarian entrants to be offered up to 400 hours of English tuition, and provide supplementary instruction for those over 24 years of age;

- * the funding for an additional 1,300 places within the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program;
- * the creation of 10 new service outlets to provide Reconnect and JPET services to newly arrived young people;
- * the recognition of the need to enhance the Family Relationships Program.

For further information or to obtain a copy of the Council's submission, contact Margaret Piper on 02 9660 5300 or 0405 144 099.