



Refugee Council  
of Australia

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## **AUSTRALIA URGED TO TAKE GREATER LEADERSHIP IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program has dropped to 6.6% of the nation's total migration program, despite an ever increasing global need for refugee resettlement and a continuing refugee protection crisis in South and South East Asia.

In its annual submission to the Australian Government, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has called for a five-year expansion of the offshore component of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places per annum, beginning with 1000 additional resettlement places in 2010-11 for highly vulnerable refugees in Asia.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, at 6.6% of Australia's permanent additions through migration in 2008-09, was now close to its lowest level in 35 years.

"The overall migration program has more than doubled over the past seven years but the Refugee and Humanitarian Program has grown by just 8% over the same period," Mr Power said.

"More than half of the world's refugees now live in what are regarded as protracted situations and the number of refugees classified by UNHCR as being in priority need of resettlement is 10 times greater than the number of resettlement places available globally in any year.

"Without devaluing the commitment of the current and previous governments to refugee resettlement, RCOA believes Australia is well placed to take on a stronger leadership role globally and in the Asia-Pacific region, by increasing its commitment to resettlement and using resettlement strategically within the region to push the case for improved refugee protection.

"Rather than proposing new forms of offshore processing for asylum seekers in an attempt to deflect national responsibility for refugee protection, the Federal Opposition would better serve Australia's interests if it worked with the Government in supporting the development of positive solutions for refugees in South and South East Asia, through humanitarian aid, capacity building and strategic use of resettlement."

Mr Power said the submission outlined a proactive strategy to expand Australia's commitment to refugee resettlement, including:

- Breaking the numerical link between the onshore protection and offshore resettlement programs;
- Increasing the resettlement program over the next five years, from the current annual average of 11,900 places to a permanent program of 20,000 places per year.
- Allocating up to 3000 resettlement places per year up to four years in advance to make longer term commitments to the resettlement of refugees from seriously protracted situations.

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia  
Phone: (02) 9211-9333 • Fax: (02) 9211-9288  
info@refugeecouncil.org.au • Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.au  
Incorporated in ACT • ABN 87 956 673 083

The Refugee Council of Australia represents  
non-government organisations and  
individuals working with and for refugees  
in Australia and around the world

- Sharing the cost of, and responsibility for, the expanded program by developing models of enhanced community and private sponsorship of refugee and humanitarian settlement.

RCOA's 139-page submission brings together community views gathered from consultations involving people in 33 cities and towns across Australia. It puts forward 58 recommendations on a wide variety of topics, including the planning of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, visa processing, onshore protection policy, refugee settlement services, employment, housing, health, education and the promotion of the refugee program to the Australian public.

The full submission can be viewed RCOA's website via the following link:  
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html>

**Media enquiries: Kate Gauthier 0414 876 139 or (02) 9211 9333**

### **GLOBAL STATISTICS AT A GLANCE**

- 15.2 million refugees (10.5 million under UNHCR mandate, 4.7 million under UNRWA mandate).
- 26 million internally displaced persons
- 827,000 asylum seekers
- 6.6 million stateless people
- 167,000 others classified by UNHCR as being in need of protection
- 5.7 million refugees in protracted situations (populations of 25,000 or more, displaced for more than five years, under UNHCR's mandate)
- 747,000 refugees assessed by UNHCR as being in priority need of resettlement, 203,000 requiring urgent resettlement in 2010
- 88,800 refugee and humanitarian resettlement places globally in 2008

### **AUSTRALIAN STATISTICS**

- 13,507 Refugee and Humanitarian visas issued in 2008-09 – 11,010 for the offshore (resettlement) program and 2,497 for the onshore protection process
- Offshore visas by region – Middle East and South West Asia 33.46%, Africa 33.24%, Asia 33.09%, Europe 0.12%, Others 0.09%
- 224,619 permanent additions through migration in 2008-09 (includes temporary visa holders given permanent residency while in Australia)
- 6.6% of permanent additions were refugee and humanitarian visa holders (includes offshore and onshore visas)

### **REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN RESETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA THEN AND NOW**

Peak years for refugee and humanitarian arrivals:

- 1949-50 – 89,199 humanitarian arrivals, 48.2% of all settler arrivals
- 1950-51 – 36,912 humanitarian arrivals, 24.1% of all settler arrivals
- 1948-49 – 33,816 humanitarian arrivals, 29.5% of all settler arrivals
- 1981-82 – 21,917 humanitarian arrivals, 18.6% of all settler arrivals
- 1980-81 – 21,847 humanitarian arrivals, 19.7% of all settler arrivals
- 1979-80 – 19,954 humanitarian arrivals, 24.7% of all settler arrivals

Past three years

- 2006-07 – 12,247 humanitarian arrivals, 8.7% of all settler arrivals
  - 2007-08 – 9,507 humanitarian arrivals, 6.4% of all settler arrivals
  - 2008-09 – 11,645 humanitarian arrivals, 7.4% of all settler arrivals
- (Offshore refugee and humanitarian visas, compared to all visas issued offshore)