

## Discussion paper

for the Annual Submission on the 2010-11 Humanitarian Program

November 2009

This discussion paper aims to provide an overview of some of the new and emerging settlement and refugee policy issues on which the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is seeking input from individuals, communities and service providers. The six areas we are seeking input for our annual submission on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program are:

1. The composition of the offshore Refugee and Humanitarian Program;
2. Communicating with the wider Australian community about the Refugee and Humanitarian Program;
3. Community, business and local government support of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program;
4. The new 'Strategic Settlement Framework' being proposed by the Australian Government.
5. Emerging settlement issues and key priorities; and
6. Strengthening post-arrival cultural orientation.

RCOA welcomes your input in response to the questions included in the six theme areas of this paper. Responses can be sent to [info@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.au) or call (02) 9211 9333 by **10 December 2009**. Feedback generated by this discussion paper will inform RCOA's submission on Australia's 2010-11 Refugee and Humanitarian Program (see [www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html) for more information).

## 1. COMPOSITION OF THE REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Refugee and Humanitarian Program comprises two components: **offshore** resettlement for people in humanitarian need overseas; and **onshore** protection for those people already in Australia who arrived on temporary visas or in an unauthorised manner, and who claim Australia's protection.

In 2010-11, Australia will dedicate **13,750 places** under the Program, divided between the offshore and onshore program. Figure 1 provides an overview of the composition of the program since 2002.

*Figure 1. Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program visa grants by stream, 2002 - 2009*

Year	Refugee	SHP	Total Offshore	Onshore	Grand Total
2002-03	4,376	7,280	11,656	869	<b>12,525</b>
2003-04	4,134	8,927	13,061	790	<b>13,851</b>
2004-05	5,511	6,755	12,266	912	<b>13,178</b>
2005-06	6,022	6,836	12,858	1,286	<b>14,144</b>
2006-07	6,003	5,275	11,278	1,739	<b>13,017</b>
2007-08	5,962	5,026	10,988	2,026	<b>13,014</b>
2008-09	6,499	4,511	11,010	2,497	<b>13,507</b>

The offshore component of the Humanitarian Program is made up of two main streams:

- The **Refugee Program** is for people subject to persecution in their home country and in need of resettlement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refers most applicants under this category for resettlement.
- The **Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)** targets people who are outside their home country and are subject to substantial persecution and/or discrimination in their home country

amounting to a gross violation of their human rights. Applications for the SHP visa (subclass 202) must be supported by a proposer who is an Australian citizen, permanent resident or a community organisation based in Australia. SHP entrants must meet health and character tests. Proposers assist with the provision of settlement support.

Australia is the only country in the world which has created a numerical link between the recognition of asylum seekers within its border with its offshore resettlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants. Each time an asylum seeker is recognised by Australia as a refugee through its onshore protection process, one position is deducted from the Special Humanitarian Program. RCOA has opposed this policy since its introduction in 1996, arguing that the onshore and offshore programs are designed to meet quite different international responsibilities. The onshore protection aims to meet Australia's obligations as a signatory to the Refugee Convention, enabling people at risk of persecution to seek refuge in Australia. The offshore resettlement program is a voluntary contribution to the sharing of international responsibility for refugees for whom no other durable solution is available.

The Special Humanitarian Program was established in 1981. At times when UNHCR had limited capacity to assess and refer refugees for resettlement, the SHP enabled Australia to maintain its commitment to humanitarian resettlement without reliance on referrals from UNHCR. The SHP also represented a cost-effective way of resettling larger numbers of refugees, as airfares and settlement supports are effectively subsidised by proposers in Australia. However, UNHCR now refers many more cases for resettlement than there are places offered by resettlement states such as Australia. UNHCR estimates the number of refugees in need of resettlement in 2010 at about 747,000 people. The total number of resettlement places offered annually around the world is only around 79,000.<sup>1</sup>

Australia has resettled refugees and humanitarian migrants from many countries. Figure 2 shows the regional breakdown of the offshore Refugee and Humanitarian program over the past 10 years.

**Figure 2. Offshore Refugee and Humanitarian visas granted by region, 1998 - 2009**

1998-99	Europe 49.72%	Middle East & SW Asia 30.64%	Africa 16.29%	Asia 3.10%	Americas 0.25%
1999-00	Europe 45.64%	Middle East & SW Asia 29.83%	Africa 22.69%	Asia 1.56%	Americas 0.28%
2000-01	Europe 43.32%	Middle East & SW Asia 26.96%	Africa 25.43%	Asia 3.95%	Americas 0.34%
2001-02	Africa 33.12%	Middle East & SW Asia 32.43%	Europe 32.03%	Asia 2.23%	Americas 0.19%
2002-03	Africa 48.32%	Middle East & SW Asia 39.94%	Europe 9.93%	Asia 1.78%	Americas 0.03%
2003-04	Africa 70.78%	Middle East & SW Asia 24.29%	Europe 3.00%	Asia 1.87%	Americas 0.06%
2004-05	Africa 70.16%	Middle East & SW Asia 26.24%	Asia 3.43%	Europe 0.16%	Americas 0.01%
2005-06	Africa 55.65%	Middle East & SW Asia 33.98%	Asia 9.88%	Europe 0.43%	Americas 0.06%
2006-07	Africa 50.91%	Middle East & SW Asia 27.95%	Asia 20.70%	Europe 0.44%	Americas 0.00%
2007-08	Middle East & SW Asia 35.25%	Asia 33.67%	Africa 30.48%	Europe 0.55%	Americas 0.05%
2008-09	Asia 33%	Middle East & SW Asia 33%	Africa 33%	Others 1%	

## 1.2 KEY ISSUES

### Balancing priorities: Refugee resettlement and family reunion

Considering global resettlement needs and the current composition of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, it is clear that the two highest priorities for the program should be: (1) The resettlement of refugees identified by UNHCR as being in need of priority resettlement; and (2) The

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2009). *Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement*, [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4ac0873d6&query=resettlement](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4ac0873d6&query=resettlement)

reunion of immediate families separated by refugee crises. The question is: How should these priorities be balanced in terms of the make-up of the offshore program? Should the current annual target of 6000 Refugee places be maintained or should refugees referred for resettlement through UNHCR make up a higher proportion of the program?

### **SHP and family reunion: Demand vs. places**

Currently, the SHP is one of the ways in which people who have come to Australia under the Humanitarian Program are able to reunite with families without the prohibitive costs associated with family stream visas and the two-year wait for accessing social security. Separation from family – particularly where family members are living in precarious situations overseas – has been shown to have significant negative impacts on the psychosocial wellbeing, economic participation and settlement outcomes of those living in Australia. With a shrinking proportion of the offshore program dedicated to the SHP, demand for family reunion visas already far exceeds places,<sup>2</sup> and neither the Refugee program nor the SHP is providing adequate responses to family separation.

### **Managing regional priorities and international obligations**

Recent publicity about an increase in asylum seekers entering Australian territory by boat has highlighted the pressing needs of asylum seekers and refugees in South East Asia, particularly in major transit countries which have not signed the Refugee Convention and don't adhere to international norms for refugee protection. Even prior to the recent increase in boat arrivals, Australia has again experienced steady growth in numbers of asylum seekers and, as a result, an increase in the number of onshore protection visas granted (see Figure 1). This has raised questions about how Australia balances its commitment to (offshore) resettlement of people most in need (for example, those in protracted refugee situations), its regional engagement (for example, prioritising resettlement of refugees from particular geographical regions) and our international obligations (to provide protection to those seeking asylum).

## **1.3 FURTHER READING**

Refugee Council of Australia (2009). *Family reunion and the Special Humanitarian Program: A discussion paper*, RCOA, Sydney.

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/family.pdf>

Refugee Council of Australia (2008). *Who bears the cost of Australia's Special Humanitarian Program? Research into the impact of travel costs on new Special Humanitarian entrants and their proposers*, RCOA, Sydney.

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/Travel\\_Costs\\_report.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/Travel_Costs_report.pdf)

Kent, L. & Abu Duhou, J (2009), *The Search for Protection: Resettled refugees reflect on seeking asylum in Asia and the Middle East*, Refugee Council of Australia, Sydney

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2009/090615\\_Search\\_for\\_Protection\\_report.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2009/090615_Search_for_Protection_report.pdf)

UNHCR (2008). *Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement*, UNHCR, Geneva.

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4ac0873d6&query=resettlement>

## **1.4 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

- 1. What proportion of the offshore Humanitarian Program should be allocated to Refugee visas (i.e. those referred by UNHCR) and what proportion should be Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visas (i.e. those referred by proposers in Australia)?**
- 2. How can the tensions between family reunion and the SHP be resolved?**
- 3. What role should Australia's regional engagement and international obligations feature in determining the composition of the offshore Program?**

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<sup>2</sup> Over the past six years, DIAC has processed around 362,000 SHP applications and granted 40,100 SHP visas. This means that 89% of applications processed were rejected.

#### 4. What other comments, concerns or suggestions do you have with regards to the composition of the offshore Humanitarian Program?

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## 2. COMMUNICATING WITH THE WIDER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

### 2.1 KEY ISSUES

**Misinformation** surrounding refugees and other humanitarian entrants (and in particular issues relating to asylum seekers) feature prominently and periodically in both the media and public debate, and have implications in terms of ongoing community and bipartisan political support for Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Examples of misinformation circulating in the public domain include:

- Periodical dissemination of hoax emails about refugees and Centrelink benefits ([www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/current/071002\\_hoax\\_email.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/current/071002_hoax_email.pdf)); and
- Recent media coverage relating to asylum seekers, refugees and welfare 'rip-offs' ([www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2724620.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2724620.htm)).

Currently, the **main channels of communication** engaging the wider Australian community around issues relating to the Humanitarian Program include:

- Department of Immigration and Citizenship – website ([www.immi.gov.au/visas/humanitarian](http://www.immi.gov.au/visas/humanitarian)), media engagement;
- Refugee Council of Australia – Refugee Week, media engagement, website;
- Media – in response to current events (e.g. arrival of boat people) and political debate;
- Local initiatives – various community organisations, schools, local government etc undertaking local community education initiatives (e.g. events, forums); and
- UNHCR Speakers' Bureau ([www.unhcr.org.au/speakers.shtml](http://www.unhcr.org.au/speakers.shtml)).

Of particular concern is the lack of consistent and wide-spread channels conveying **positive messages** regarding the contribution of refugees to Australia.

### 2.2 FURTHER READING

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (URL), *Refugee and Humanitarian Program*, <http://www.immi.gov.au/visas/humanitarian/>

The Media Report, ABC Radio National (2 March 2000), *The Media Report: Refugees and the Media*, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/mediarpt/stories/s105397.htm>

Media Watch, ABC Television (26 October 2009), *Welfare and Refugees*, <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2724620.htm>

Refugee Council of Australia, (URL), *Asking the Media to Correct Mistakes*, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/current/mediablunders.html>

Refugee Council of Australia (URL), *Refugee Week*, [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rw\\_index.html](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rw_index.html)

UNHCR Speakers' Bureau, <http://www.unhcr.org.au/speakers.shtml>

### 2.3 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

5. How should the Government (and RCOA) better communicate messages about the Humanitarian Program to the wider Australian community to address concerns and misinformation?

6. What are the best channels to do this?

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## **3. COMMUNITY, BUSINESS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

### **3.1 BACKGROUND**

Global refugee resettlement needs continue to far outweigh the available places offered by resettlement countries. In 2008, a total of 88,800 refugees were admitted by 16 resettlement countries. That is less than 1 per cent (only 0.8%) of the world's refugees directly benefiting from resettlement.<sup>3</sup> In 2009-10, Australia will dedicate 13,750 places under the Program, divided between the offshore and onshore program. All indications are, given the financial circumstances of the Australian Government, that the funding available for the Program will not increase in coming years. However, given the pressing need for an expansion of refugee resettlement, is there a case for seeking increased community, business and local government support to seek an expansion of Australia's refugee resettlement? How could these options work? With a new refugee settlement framework under consideration, it is timely to explore these questions.

### **3.2 MODELS OF SUPPORT**

#### **Local government involvement in Warrnambool**

From 2003 to 2005, Warrnambool City Council conducted a pilot project to assist refugee families to relocate from Melbourne to regional Victoria. The subsequent report on the outcomes of the project is a useful resource for local councils to model strategies for refugee settlement in their areas. The Warrnambool model was successful because its aims were both to provide a stable, safe and welcoming community for refugees to rebuild their lives and to nurture and support the existing local community in understanding and welcoming their new community members.

#### **Private sponsorship in Canada**

Canada has had an active program of private sponsorship for refugees for the past 30 years, settling 2,500 to 4,000 refugees each year. Under this program, sponsoring groups, including community humanitarian groups, large businesses and groups of private citizens, agree to provide the refugees that they sponsor with care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for the duration of the sponsorship period. Normally, this is 12 months starting from the refugee's arrival in Canada or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first. There also models of blended sponsorship, where responsibility for supporting refugees is shared between private sponsors and the Canadian Government.

#### **Volunteer-based groups in regional and metropolitan Australia**

While the role of volunteers in settlement support has diminished in Australia over the past 15 years, one volunteer network which has continued to grow is the Sanctuary Refugee Foundation. From a small group of volunteers in Coffs Harbour (NSW) in 1998, the Sanctuary network has grown to include groups in 15 cities and towns in four states. The Sanctuary groups propose refugees under the Special Humanitarian Program, raising funds for airfares and developing local networks of volunteer support to assist the families after arrival. The groups have done much to build local support for their work and have enabled refugee settlement to occur in regional towns where little or no direct refugee settlement has occurred previously. The Sanctuary groups are among quite a number of volunteer groups involved in similar work around Australia. A number of them, like the original Coffs Harbour Sanctuary group, were established in the 1980s under the then Community Refugee Support Scheme. Most community groups involved in volunteer-based settlement under the SHP are ethno-specific community organisations, often formed by former refugees to resettle refugees from their country of origin.

### **3.3 FURTHER READING**

Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (Canada):

[www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/index.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/index.asp)

Warrnambool's Guide for Local Government on Refugee Resettlement

<http://www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au/Files/Warrnambool-welcome.pdf>

Sanctuary Refugee Foundation - <http://www.sanctuaryrefugeefoundation.org/>

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR 2008 Global Trends

### 3.4 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

7. **What role can community, business and local governments have in resettling refugees under the offshore Humanitarian Program?**
  8. **What role might private sponsorship play? What would private sponsorship look like? What would be the benefits? What would be the challenges?**
  9. **What local initiatives or models of community, business or local government-based support exist that could be adapted or applied in other areas in Australia?**
  10. **How can volunteers and volunteer-based organisations play a greater role in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and resettlement? What are the implications of an increased role for volunteer-based organisations?**
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## 4. A NEW 'STRATEGIC SETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK'

### 4.1 KEY ISSUES

On 25 September 2009, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, foreshadowed changes to on-arrival refugee settlement services following recent national consultations about the future of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Mr Ferguson said IHSS was good at meeting immediate needs but less successful at creating sustainable settlement outcomes. He said the Government was considering a new settlement framework, "to provide a continuum from offshore to onshore to deliver long-term sustainable settlement outcomes".

Mr Ferguson's speech also highlighted the gaps and issues that emerged out of the IHSS consultations, including: isolation, lack of youth engagement, problems accessing housing, problems accessing employment and training and some weaknesses in cultural orientation.

Changes foreshadowed in Mr Ferguson's speech include the introduction of a new settlement framework featuring greater cooperation between the various DIAC-funded services: the offshore Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO), IHSS, the Settlement Grants Program, Adult Migrant English Program, Complex Case Support and interpreting services

With IHSS tenders due to be released in early-2010, Mr Ferguson flagged the redevelopment of a new model with key changes including:

- strengthening the flexible client-centred approach to **case management**, tailoring case management to individual needs and developing and cultivating a path to education and employment;
- exploring options for flexible, innovative **housing solutions** – including group housing and other community housing models;
- **vulnerable clients** to benefit from increased contact time, ongoing case management, intensive cultural orientation; group-based learning and collective support structures;
- the introduction of an **onshore orientation program** that reinforces and builds on the messages delivered through AUSCO;
- emphasis on **skill development and competency-based learning rather than time-based service delivery**;
- a stronger **focus on youth**;
- more effective **links to other settlement and community programs** and **stronger connections with community supports** such as ethnic organisations, and recreation and social groups; and
- simplification of the **cost structure** of the new program and reduction of costs associated with administering the contracts.

Mr Ferguson's speech is at [www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm)

## 4.2 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

**11. What are your comments regarding the foreshadowed changes to the IHSS and the introduction of a new Strategic Settlement Framework?**

**12. What do you think needs to happen to ensure that these changes are effectively implemented?**

## 5. IDENTIFYING EMERGING SETTLEMENT ISSUES AND KEY PRIORITIES

### 5.1 KEY ISSUES

Each year, RCOA conducts national community consultations to garner views on current changes and future directions in Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. These consultations inform RCOA's annual submission to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship on issues the Australian Government should consider in planning the coming year's refugee program. While many of the same issues and concerns are raised each year by refugee communities and service providers, reflecting the enormous challenges and complexities of settling in a new country, it is important to recognise that these issues are not intractable and there are many positive changes that have been brought about by government and community-driven initiatives.

The following table presents an overview of key settlement issues that have been raised in recent years and some of the recommendations RCOA has made based on community feedback, as well as some of the changes that have taken place or are currently taking place. While this table is not meant to represent the full range of issues, recommendations and changes that have taken place over the past few years, it is hoped that it will provide a useful jumping off point for considering new and emerging issues and how to prioritise ongoing concerns.

Theme	Some key recommendations made in recent years	Changes to date
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase funding for projects which address the support needs of recently arrived humanitarian entrant families, with a particular focus on addressing the disempowerment of refugee men.</li> <li>▪ That guidance on where to get help with family problems as well as greater information about the Australian legal system, including the role of police and government authorities, be included in on-arrival orientation for humanitarian entrants.</li> <li>▪ That the Australian Government apply the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook's definition of family when determining refugee and humanitarian visa applications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE) funded by FaHCSIA</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring employment services (new Job Services Australia) meet needs of humanitarian entrants.</li> <li>▪ Service providers assisting humanitarian entrants with employment transitions should receive adequate resources to meet identified needs.</li> <li>▪ DIAC and DEEWR examine ways to encourage recognition by employers of employment experience obtained overseas, including through better accreditation processes as well as increased support for awareness-raising and training initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Employment Services (Job Services Australia) rolled out in July 2009 (including Innovation Fund)</li> <li>▪ Introduction of employment and vocational training pathways in AMEP</li> </ul>
English language training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Delivery of language training should be more flexible to meet the particular needs of humanitarian entrants, that greater attention be paid to avoiding impediments to education caused by Job Network requirements, and that other necessary support for language learning such as access to adequate levels of childcare be ensured nationwide.</li> <li>▪ Greater deployment of bilingual aides and teaching assistants in the AMEP to assist pre-literate humanitarian entrants with little or no English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of AMEP in 2008-09</li> <li>▪ Introduction of different streams (social and employment) within AMEP</li> </ul>
Education, training and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The development of new education strategies for refugee children and young people that better reflect their needs, including by</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some State-based Refugee Education</li> </ul>

qualifications	<p>investigating how existing educational programs offered by schools and TAFE colleges could be adapted to meet the learning needs of teenagers with limited prior formal education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DIAC and DEEWR establish a fund to provide subsidies to assist humanitarian entrants undertaking bridging courses to have overseas qualifications recognised in Australia.</li> </ul>	Strategies developed (e.g. Victoria)
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ That DIAC, in consultation with State agencies and other Federal departments, coordinate a comprehensive housing strategy to address the specific needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants.</li> <li>▪ That DIAC explore options for partnerships with the community housing sector to provide on-arrival accommodation and work to develop the provision of housing designed to accommodate humanitarian entrants for up to three years following arrival.</li> <li>▪ That greater resources be allocated to IHSS and SGP providers for housing support services to reflect current challenges in accessing affordable housing and that consideration be given to extending these services to SHP entrants.</li> <li>▪ That urgent attention be given to developing accommodation suitable for very large households.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foreshadowing of community housing options in new IHSS contract</li> <li>▪ February 2009 announcement of Social Housing Initiative, with 19,200 social housing dwellings to be build as part of the Economic Stimulus Plan</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DIAC assess the situation of each family or individual whose departure to Australia is delayed by a failed pre-departure medical check, to determine whether special assistance is required while their health status is resolved.</li> <li>▪ That the Australian Government work with states and healthcare providers to develop specialist refugee health services able to deliver consistent and culturally appropriate health assessments soon after arrival, as well as systems to better coordinate ongoing care.</li> <li>▪ That national benchmarks be established for health service provision for newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants, including the development of a standardised health screening tool and full immunisation services.</li> <li>▪ Steps be taken to facilitate the greater use of Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) by General Practitioners, specialists and other health professionals through training and awareness-raising, as well as the introduction of financial incentives and appropriate sanctions.</li> <li>▪ A National Refugee Health Database and National Refugee Health Network be established and coordinated with Federal Government funding in order to share research data, information and models of best practice between States and Territories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refugee Health Network Australia established</li> <li>▪ Improving on-arrival health services key consultation area in 2009 IHSS review (tenders to be announced in early 2010)</li> </ul>
Funding and delivery of settlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need for evaluation of current arrangements under IHSS, including the competitive tendering of on-arrival services.</li> <li>▪ SGP Funding to be for minimum durations of 2, 3 or 4 years and that provision for an appropriate level of core funding is included within contracts to ensure sustainability and staff retention.</li> <li>▪ Need for DIAC to review the current role of volunteers in the IHSS and SHP, seeking good practice models to inform planning for both programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National consultation on IHSS in 2009</li> <li>▪ Announcement of new Strategic Settlement Framework</li> </ul>
Post-arrival cultural orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A review of post-arrival cultural orientation to assess the availability of appropriate and effective programs to all who may require it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasis on post-arrival orientation foreshadowed in new Strategic Settlement Framework.</li> </ul>
Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DIAC release quantitative and qualitative information about the types of SHP applications being received, how applications are being assessed and the criteria used in determining which applications are successful.</li> <li>▪ That the Australian Government cover the cost of airfares for SHP entrants and/or implement the other recommendations outlined in the RCOA report, <i>Who Bears the Cost of Australia's Special Humanitarian Program?</i></li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding be made available for non fee charging migration agents to provide assistance to people lodging SHP applications</li> <li>▪ A specific Humanitarian Family Reunion visa category be developed, linked numerically to the Special Humanitarian Program and offering settlement support for new arrivals.</li> <li>▪ Special priority be given to processing applications from former temporary protection and temporary humanitarian visa holders seeking to reunite with their families.</li> </ul>	
Rural/ regional settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research needed on why refugees move into or away from regional areas and what impact this has on their settlement in Australia to better inform future planning of regional resettlement initiatives.</li> <li>▪ A fund be established that can be used to enable IHSS or other regional services to expand flexibly in a timely manner to meet the needs of larger fluxes of secondary migration of humanitarian entrants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A number of research projects on regional settlement underway or completed (e.g. McDonald et al 2008)</li> </ul>
Onshore protection and asylum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minister for Immigration and Citizenship to establish a working group to conduct a review of onshore protection policies, inviting public submissions on policy priorities</li> <li>▪ DIAC improve the provision of settlement support services to Protection Visa (PV) holders who are able to demonstrate a particular need for support owing to their individual circumstances, including needs arising from destitution or lack of necessary support during the determination of their asylum claims.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Onshore Protection Consultative Group established in 2009.</li> <li>▪ Some capacity for IHSS services to assist PV holders, decided case by case.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As a first step towards a national strategy to reduce the additional disadvantage faced by humanitarian entrants who do not have drivers' licences, research be commissioned on current community responses to this issue.</li> </ul>	
Community education and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DIAC extend access to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) to all real estate agents, and work with the Real Estate Institute of Australia on improving housing solutions for refugees through awareness-raising and incentives such as national or state/territory awards recognising good practice.</li> <li>▪ That police and child protection authorities increase cultural awareness training for frontline staff and engage community leaders in dialogue about how to conduct interventions in a more culturally sensitive manner.</li> <li>▪ That the Australian Government pay greater attention to developing public education programs focused on promoting positive images of refugees and on helping the Australian public understand the role of the offshore humanitarian program and the backgrounds of the refugees who have come to Australia.</li> <li>▪ DIAC prepare a plan which includes strategies to ensure that all humanitarian entrants, including new and emerging communities, have access to appropriate interpreter services following arrival in Australia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pilot announced to expand access to TIS for real estate agents</li> <li>▪ Scholarships for people to pursue translating and interpreting accreditation in new and emerging languages.</li> </ul>

## 5.2 FURTHER READING

Refugee Council of Australia's *Annual Submissions on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program: Community views on current challenges and future directions*  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html)

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2008), *Empowering Refugees – A Good Practice Guide to Humanitarian Settlement*, DIAC, Canberra  
[www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering\\_refugees/](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering_refugees/)

Ferguson, L (25 September 2009), *Parliamentary Secretary announcement of the Strategic Settlement Framework*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship.  
[www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm](http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm)

McDonald, B, Gifford, S, Webster, K & Wiseman, J (2008). *Refugee Resettlement in Regional and Rural Victoria: Impacts and Policy Issues*, VicHealth, Carlton  
[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/Publications/Attachments/RefugeeResettlement\\_Web2.ashx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/Publications/Attachments/RefugeeResettlement_Web2.ashx)

### **5.3 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

- 13. What do you see as the two most pressing issues for refugees settling in Australia?**
  - 14. What emerging issues concerning the settlement of refugee communities are you seeing or experiencing?**
  - 15. Are there any recent or proposed changes to policy or services which are adversely affecting refugee communities? If so, what do you think needs to be done?**
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## **6. STRENGTHENING POST-ARRIVAL CULTURAL ORIENTATION**

### **6.1 KEY ISSUES**

Newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants face a range of challenges when they settle in Australia, including acquiring foundational English skills, understanding Australian bureaucratic, educational and business structures and adjusting to a society and culture which differs significantly from what they have previously experienced. Although elements of cultural orientation to assist with navigating these challenges exist in the work of Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Settlement Grants Program (SGP) providers, an overall strategy linking the AUSCO<sup>4</sup>, IHSS, AMEP and SGP cultural orientation practices is missing. This deficit increases the likelihood of new arrivals missing out on fundamentally important information about life in Australia.

#### **Post-arrival cultural orientation**

Among the post-arrival services, there are many examples of cultural orientation programs and a variety of ways in which they are designed and delivered. For example:

- The Cultural and Language Development (CALD) Hub program of ACCES Services Inc in Queensland provides integration services and orientation to Australia, including literacy and life skills (e.g., opening bank accounts and enrolling children in school).
- The Community Guides program in AMES Victoria is another example of a program specifically dedicated to orienting newly arrived entrants to Australia. Entrants are matched with guides (who are often former refugees) who have bi-language skills in English and the language of the new communities. The guides undertake practical tasks in initial settlement and link refugees to their respective communities and to the broader Australian community.

#### **An integrated strategy for post-arrival cultural orientation?**

With IHSS and AUSCO tenders to be announced in early 2010, and the Federal Government foreshadowing a greater emphasis on post-arrival cultural orientation in the new Strategic Settlement Framework, there is an opportunity to contribute ideas to how Australia can develop an integrated, long-term strategy to post-arrival cultural orientation for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

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<sup>4</sup> The Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program is a five-day program funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and delivered overseas to refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visa entrants by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Conducted in 17 countries across Asia, Africa and the Middle East, AUSCO is presented (prior to entrants' arrival in Australia) in refugee camps and urban settings by IOM staff, and follows a curriculum set by DIAC covering Australian government, geography and climate, cultural adjustment, travel to Australia, settling in, healthcare, education, finding a job, money management, housing, transport, Australian law, citizenship and access to trauma and torture counselling.

## 6.2 FURTHER READING

Laurie Ferguson (25 September 2009), *Parliamentary Secretary announcement of the Strategic Settlement Framework*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/lf090925.htm>

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Fact Sheet 67 – The Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program*

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/67ausco.htm>

Refugee Council of Australia (2009) *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program: Community views on current challenges and future directions, January 2009* (Chapter 6.5), RCOA, Sydney

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/2009-10\\_intakesub.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/2009-10_intakesub.pdf)

## 6.3 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

**16. What are some examples of good post-arrival cultural orientation for newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants? What do you think is working well?**

**17. How do you think post-arrival cultural orientation can be improved so that refugee and humanitarian entrants can access the information necessary to navigate their new life in Australia?**

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