



Refugee Council
of Australia

17 October 2011

RESETTLEMENT FREEZE SENDS WRONG MESSAGE

The Refugee Council of Australia has expressed dismay at the Australian Government's decision to overturn a planned increase of 1000 resettlement places under the Refugee Program.

RCOA CEO Paul Power said the decision to keep the Refugee Program at 6000 places was the wrong approach to take at a time when global resettlement places are in decline.

Last year, global resettlement places decreased by 12 per cent to just 98,761 and are expected to decline further in 2011. In 2012, it is expected that only 10 per cent of the 780,000 refugees identified by the UNHCR as being in priority need of resettlement will have the opportunity to resettle.

In the 2011-12 Federal Budget, the Australian Government announced plans, associated with the arrangement with Malaysia, to increase the Refugee Program by 1000 places to 7000 places, increasing the overall Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 14,750. The Government promised to increase refugee resettlement by 4000 places over four years regardless of the numbers of asylum seekers transferred to Malaysia.

"The decision by the Australian Government not to increase the number of places makes a mockery of its argument that people seeking protection should wait for resettlement," Mr Power said.

"Increased resettlement would have helped address the factors that drive the movement of refugees and asylum seekers to Australia by boat, offering the greater prospect of a solution to refugees who have not been able to find effective protection elsewhere.

"By not increasing the resettlement quota, Australia is setting a poor example as chair of UNHCR's Working Group on Resettlement for 2011-12.

"In this role, Australia should be showing leadership in pushing for increased resettlement. Australia is missing a strategic opportunity to demonstrate that resettlement is vital to improving refugee protection and sharing the responsibility both in our region and globally," Mr Power said.

Media contact: Andrew Williams 0488 035 535

Explanatory note: Under the Refugee Program, refugees who have been recognised as refugees in various countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East are resettled in cooperation with UNHCR. The remaining 7750 places in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program are divided between the Special Humanitarian Program (which allows for resettlement of refugees proposed by Australian residents and organisations) and the Onshore Protection Program (under which asylum seekers who reach Australia are recognised as refugees).

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