



Refugee Council of Australia

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AUSTRALIA URGED TO TAKE LEAD ON RESETTLEMENT

Australia has been urged to lead by example when it hosts global discussions on refugee resettlement later this month by increasing its offshore resettlement program and encouraging other countries to accept more refugees.

Releasing RCOA's annual submission on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, CEO Paul Power said global resettlement places were diminishing while the number of refugees was increasing.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 781,299 of the 10.55 million refugees under its mandate are in need of resettlement.

Of these, 172,196 refugees need resettlement this year. Unfortunately, only 80,000 places have been made available by resettlement countries.

Mr Power said Melbourne's hosting of the Working Group on Resettlement later this month was an important opportunity for Australia to highlight the decline in resettlement places.

"Australia's critical role in resettlement planning this year provides a rare opportunity for the Australian Government to lead by example," Mr Power said.

"Australia's program should be guided by the expansion of the offshore Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places per year, a focus on resettling the most vulnerable refugees and an emphasis on maintaining family unity.

"Resettlement can be used as part of an overarching strategy for refugee protection that also includes aid, action on human rights and regional cooperation to improve conditions for refugees and manage the movement of asylum seekers by boat.

"Over the past five years, Australia has resettled refugees from Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia but we have seen little improvement in living conditions for refugees and asylum seekers who remain within those countries."

RCOA's submission also explores developments in Asia-Pacific regional cooperation, emphasising the urgent need for reform of Australian asylum policies and for more effective international action to address the poor treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in many parts of South-East and South Asia.

The submission was based on consultations held late last year throughout Australia with 730 participants representing 188 organisations and 33 refugee communities. It can be accessed at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/intakesub.php>

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