



Refugee Council of Australia

Response to Australian Government discussion paper: ‘Measures to improve settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants’

24 November 2006

Introduction

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) commends the creation of an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) of Australian Government agencies to develop a unified approach to improve settlement outcomes for refugees and for Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) entrants. We welcome the opportunity to present a submission responding to the discussion paper developed by the IDC, acknowledging that the changes recommended in the discussion paper will potentially have a significant effect on the settlement of most of the current and future refugee and humanitarian caseload.

The Refugee Council of Australia has 25 years experience in research, advocacy and policy analysis on international and domestic refugee issues. In the five weeks since the discussion paper was released, RCOA has canvassed the views of representatives of many organisations involved in supporting refugees and refugee settlement. This submission draws together views from across the Australian refugee sector.

Part one: Complex Case Support Network

Background

The Refugee Council commends the IDC’s recognition that some current refugees and humanitarian entrants may require an enhanced level of settlement support as a result of their complex needs. It also welcomes the idea of implementing a system to address such needs through the provision of specialised case support.

RCOA agrees that there is a need to provide early intervention strategies for clients with complex needs and that the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) providers do not currently have the resources or capacity to provide this level of assistance. Some of the disillusionment with the current IHSS is due to a mistaken expectation that they will be able to provide “intensive settlement support” as described in the overview of the Complex Case Support Network (CCSN). The IHSS was not initially set up to deal with the degree of complexity presented by some of the new cases.

Overview of Complex Case Support Network

The Refugee Council welcomes the proposed provision of support and assistance to clients in crisis situations and the provision of specialised case management assistance in particular cases as key functions for the CCSN. However, the Refugee Council wishes to acknowledge that the existing settlement services sector in Australia has developed a system of service

provision for refugees and other humanitarian entrants which is second to none in the world. The Refugee Council would like to seek clarification on how the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) and IHSS will interact with the CCSN (particularly in relation to the last three bullet points on page 10 of the discussion paper), while building on the strengths of existing services and avoiding unnecessary duplication.

The relationship between CCSN and other service providers

The Refugee Council believes that the provision of complex case support should be closely connected to the IHSS or the SGP, to ensure continuity of care for vulnerable refugee clients. RCOA strongly advises against the provision of these services through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). Providing this level of support requires a significant amount of trust. Unfortunately, for many refugees who have been persecuted by the authorities in their country of origin, it will take some time before they are able to trust government institutions in Australia.

The Refugee Council also advises against a competitive tendering process for the CCSN. An alternative approach is required. The competitive tendering process for IHSS has left the settlement sectors in some states quite deeply divided, undermining the ability of workers to provide the coordinated approach needed for effective settlement.

It is the opinion of the Refugee Council that the delivery model for the CCSN and the way it will interact with existing services are pivotal for the success or failure of the complex case support model in the future. Therefore, the Refugee Council recommends further consultations with the settlement sector on this specific issue, acknowledging their expertise in this area.

Target group

RCOA welcomes the proposal that people released from detention will also be eligible for CCSN services on a needs basis. However, it recommends that the criteria be further extended to include asylum seekers who are living within the community, many of whom are not allowed to work and rely entirely on charity for their survival.

RCOA would also like to seek clarification on how the CCSN will work in conjunction with the existing Community Care Pilot, which appears to provide a similar complex case support system to some vulnerable detention release cases. An integrated and holistic approach between services will be essential.

How do clients get complex case support

The discussion paper refers to the initial assessment as part of the IHSS process. However, complex needs may not necessarily be initially apparent. RCOA welcomes the acceptance in the discussion paper of the need for clients to be referred at any time during the first two years of settlement. Vulnerable clients might not appear to be vulnerable during the initial stages of the settlement experience. It is not uncommon, for example, for humanitarian entrants to present symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder some time after their arrival in Australia.

RCOA seeks clarification on how clients can be referred to the CCSN. It is unclear how and by whom clients will be referred and what a referral actually means. RCOA recommends that the needs assessments be completed by the referring agency so that the client does not have to go through an assessment twice. This referral would then be a guarantee of at least some measure of service delivery under the CCSN. The Refugee Council recommends that a strong assessment tool needs to be developed to identify the caseload for CCSN.

Complex Case Support Managers and Youth Support Coordinators

The Refugee Council strongly supports the concept of Complex Case Support Managers and Youth Support Coordinators. But again we emphasise the need for them be part of the existing settlement support sector, whether under the IHSS or placed in accessible organisations active within the sector.

The Refugee Council welcomes the focus on particular services for young people considering the nature of the current caseload and the very specific needs that these group of clients present. There are already good quality services and activities targeting young people provided through a number of programs. The capacity of these services needs to be enhanced and the services need to be properly funded in order to benefit from their already existing expertise and to avoid duplication of services. Consideration could also be given to the role of emerging communities entering into partnership with already existing services.

Indicators of ability to function in the Australian community

The client's ability to function in the Australian community may, in some cases, be an indication of readiness to exit IHSS or CCSN. However, it is not the only indicator especially in the case of clients exiting the CCSN. Consideration must also be given to the specific complex needs that resulted in the person being referred to the CCS in the first instance. It is not appropriate to use the same indicators to exit the IHSS and the CSS due to the different level of complexity that cases under both systems present.

Successful settlement is not just about whether someone can use an ATM and travel on public transport. Consideration also needs to be given to mental health issues, isolation and levels of family and community support. Regardless of the assessed "readiness" to exit IHSS or CCS, all clients should be introduced to and feel comfortable accessing their nearest SGP provider, to increase opportunities for support being available if and when complex issues present themselves. The Refugee Council recommends that indicators about readiness to exit CSSN be based on the particular client's case plan, rather than on functionality, and that the case plan be closely connected with the assessment tools that resulted in the person being referred to the CCSN.

The role of volunteers

RCOA fully supports and acknowledges the key role that volunteers play in the settlement process and welcomes the engagement of volunteers within the CCSN. However, RCOA believes that the delivery of complex casework requires professionally qualified paid caseworkers. When working with vulnerable clients, it is essential that case workers are suitably qualified to address a range of complex issues, in particular the emotional and psychological issues relating to experiences of torture and trauma. To place vulnerable clients directly in the care of volunteers (without suitable qualifications) is inappropriate for both the volunteer and the client. Volunteers should be focused on roles which are appropriate for volunteers, such as social support, advocacy and occasional assistance with practical matters, in line with a case plan developed by the professional case worker.

Recommendations: Part 1

Recommendation 1: The Refugee Council recommends further consultations with the settlement sector about the delivery model for the CCSN.

Recommendation 2: The Refugee Council recommends that the selection criteria for the CCSN be further extended to include asylum seekers who are living within the community and are in need of this support.

Recommendation 3: The Refugee Council recommends that the needs assessments for the CCSN be completed by the referring agency, so that the client does not have to go through multiple assessments and to ensure that a referral is a guarantee of at least some measure of service delivery under the CCSN.

Recommendation 4: The Refugee Council recommends that indicators about readiness to exit CSSN are based on the particular client's case plan, rather than on functionality, and that the case plan is closely connected with the assessment tools that resulted in the person being referred to the CCSN.

Part two: Offshore cultural orientation

The Refugee Council welcomes the IDC's focus on seeking improvements to the offshore cultural orientation program. The need for enhancements of this program have been addressed on a number of occasions by RCOA, including in two prior submissions to the DIMA:

- *Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program: Current Issues and Future Directions – Views from the Community Sector – February 2006 (Intake Submission 2006-07);*
- *Evaluation of Pre-Embarkation Cultural Orientation Program – Final Report To DIMIA – June 2004*

The Refugee Council acknowledges and commends the implementation of the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program and welcomes its enhancement through increasing the length of the courses and through targeted and culturally appropriate curriculum development.

Engaging humanitarian entrants before arriving in Australia

There is little doubt that the pre-embarkation cultural orientation program is having a significant and positive impact on early settlement in Australia of humanitarian entrants. However, there could be improvements in access to the course, flexibility of approaches and greater participation.

While available to all humanitarian entrants, participation in the AUSCO program is not compulsory and a large number of humanitarian entrants arrive in Australia without attending the classes, particularly SHP entrants. Some SHP entrants report difficulties in travelling to the classes, or concerns with the cost of travelling when the classes are held in major cities. There have also been problems in terms of accessing interpreters or being able to understand written material provided in the course.

RCOA believes that AUSCO needs to be tailored to different caseloads and the information needs to be delivered to all family members. The Refugee Council commends the piloting of the program aimed at 8-12 year olds in Thailand. It would be particularly useful if all the programs had a measure of flexibility so that they could adapt to particular caseloads.

In order to encourage access to the program, high attendance levels and effective engagement of AUSCO participants, RCOA recommends that:

- The classes not exceed 20 participants to ensure effective learning.
- There is an appropriate use of interpreters to maximise understanding of the contents and access to translated materials.

- Support be provided for those attending the program, including childcare, financial support for travel and practical support to travel safely to the course venue.
- The program be tailored to the needs of specific caseloads.

Skills and knowledge required by humanitarian entrants

The Refugee Council noted in its Intake Submission 2006-07 concerns about unrealistic expectations by new entrants arriving in Australia. This has been particularly apparent in the areas of housing, furnishing and employment. Many entrants were disappointed with the housing that they were initially allocated. Employment expectations were high, often tied to pre-conceptions around Australia's standard of living. The Refugee Council believes that using previous humanitarian entrants in some capacity within the orientation would assist greatly in giving a more balanced picture of life in Australia as a refugee. It was also noted that trainers who had never been to Australia were conducting some classes. RCOA recommends using refugees at different stages of the settlement process in the video presentations used through AUSCO or employing people from refugee backgrounds to deliver part of the cultural orientation program. Alternatively, it is recommended that DIMIA bring current instructors to Australia for exposure visits and induction.

Regarding specific skills and knowledge that should be included in the orientation program, the Refugee Council would like to refer to recommendations 20 to 24 from RCOA's *Evaluation of Pre-Embarkation Cultural Orientation Program – Final Report to DIMIA* (June 2004). The Refugee Council believes that the implementation of these recommendations would enhance positive settlement outcomes for refugees and other humanitarian entrants.

Post-arrival orientation

The Refugee Council has noted that many service providers in Australia are unfamiliar with the content of the AUSCO program. This is of concern because they need to be well informed in order to provide consistency in responses to new arrivals and reinforce the information the new arrivals have already received. The Refugee Council believes that there is a need for post arrival orientation which is directly linked with AUSCO, so that humanitarian entrants receive consistent and reinforcing messages. There is a limit to the information which can be absorbed prior to departure. This is compounded by issues of trauma. Integrating pre and post embarkation orientation would help to reduce confusion and provide practical training to make sense of some of the theoretical information provided pre-departure. It is the opinion of the Refugee Council that there also needs to be a formal mechanism for feedback from former students of the AUSCO program, so that it continues to adapt to changing needs.

RCOA recommends that an integrated post-arrival program be established to complement AUSCO and in addition to the existing IHSS. It also recommends that a process be established to ensure that the settlement sector is fully informed and consulted about AUSCO's content.

Recommendations: Part Two

Recommendation 5: The Refugee Council recommends that classes in the AUSCO program be restricted to a maximum of 20 participants, to ensure effective learning.

Recommendation 6: The Refugee Council recommends that the use of interpreters within the AUSCO program be expanded to maximise understanding of the program's contents and access to translated materials.

Recommendation 7: The Refugee Council recommends that AUSCO participants be given additional assistance with childcare and be assisted to travel safely to the course venue.

Recommendation 8: The Refugee Council recommends that AUSCO be tailored to the needs of specific caseloads.

Recommendation 9: The Refugee Council recommends making greater use of refugees who have settled in Australia as part of the AUSCO process, through featuring resettling refugees in video presentations and employing people from refugee backgrounds to deliver part of the cultural orientation program. Alternatively, it is recommended that DIMA brings current instructors to Australia for an exposure visit and induction.

Recommendation 10: The Refugee Council recommends that an integrated post-arrival program be established to complement AUSCO (in addition to the existing IHSS).

Recommendation 11: The Refugee Council recommends that a process be established to ensure that the settlement sector is fully informed and consulted about AUSCO's content.

Part three: Special Humanitarian Program Proposers

Further strengthening settlement outcomes

RCOA acknowledges that, due to the changing SHP caseload, proposers are less able to provide the level of settlement support required by SHP arrivals. This is due to two factors: the difficulties many proposers are facing in undergoing the settlement process themselves; and the level of complex needs of many new arrivals. However, RCOA is concerned that the new measures outlined in the discussion paper will have a negative impact on the most vulnerable refugees and humanitarian entrants, particularly those applying for family reunion. RCOA believes that a possible way forward is to provide appropriate settlement support that acknowledges the needs of this current caseload, rather than the introduction of minimum requirements for individual proposers which, in practice, would restrict access to family reunion. RCOA proposes an alternative model at the end of this section.

The Refugee Council commends the Australian Government's commitment to providing support and protection to those most in need. Australia can be proud of a quality offshore Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program, which sets a benchmark for resettlement programs around the world. This program has traditionally focused on welcoming and supporting the most vulnerable refugees and humanitarian entrants and those who have been subjected to persecution and human rights breaches. The SHP is a commendable initiative that clearly establishes Australia as a global leader in its commitment to vulnerable humanitarian entrants.

RCOA is concerned about the potential change of focus that the current proposals might bring to the SHP. It is the opinion of the Refugee Council that vulnerability and humanitarian need should remain the SHP's prime focuses, rather than the potential of humanitarian entrants to settle successfully in Australia or the capacity of the proposer to support the entrant.

Enhancing proposer assistance

RCOA acknowledges the importance of successful settlement outcomes for both entrants and proposers and notes that some proposers have a lesser capacity to support new arrivals. However, RCOA is particularly concerned that the proposals outlined in the discussion paper

will affect people proposing family members under the split family provision of the SHP who fail to meet the new minimum requirements for proposers.

Reuniting with family is a significant element in the settlement process and delaying this will only cause unnecessary anguish and further delay successful settlement. It is widely acknowledged that family reunion is the number one priority for refugees and other humanitarian entrants when they arrive in Australia. Recent arrivals and future proposers face enormous pressure knowing that their loved ones have been left in the camps or countries of first asylum in dangerous situations. A sense of hope for the future and the leaving behind of past traumas are delayed until the family is reunited. Humanitarian entrants are settling in practical terms but not settling psychologically because of their fears for family members left in refugee camps.

The Refugee Council believes that the settlement experience cannot be successful if family reunion needs are not widely acknowledged and supported. Lengthening the period of time people have to wait to become SHP proposers will delay settlement, undermine people's hope and increase the risk of family members dying in faraway places.

The impacts of the restrictions to family reunion under the Temporary Protection Visa regime have been well documented and it is broadly acknowledged that this policy has led to family members using other methods to try and reunite with family in Australia. The sinking of SIEV X tragically highlighted this.

The Refugee Council recommends that people proposing family members under the split family provision be afforded priority application processing. This should not be reliant only upon a client's capacity to form relationships with community or voluntary organisations. Adequate support should be provided in this area.

Minimum period of employment

The minimum period of employment of a year is problematic for a number of reasons:

- Necessary support for SHP applicants is dependant upon the commitment and capacity of the proposer. The employment status of the proposer does not necessarily improve a proposer's capacity to provide support.
- As already expressed in the discussion paper, if a proposer is in full time employment, it may in fact decrease his/her capacity to provide settlement support. The proposer will have little time to spend with the new entrant, restricting the proposer's capacity to support the new entrant with many practical matters needing attention.
- The minimum period of employment unfairly disadvantages certain groups, including women at risk who are the sole heads of household. Most of them are likely to be unable to work mainly due to family and childcare responsibilities.
- Refugees are willing to work. However, largely due to language barriers, lack of knowledge of the system, lack of local experience and difficulty in obtaining formal recognition of their previous qualifications, some refugees have difficulty securing and maintaining employment in the short term.
- The application of a minimum employment period will restrict family reunion for those who are unable to work due to family responsibilities, university studies, disability or health constraints.
- There are alternative ways of testing establishment in Australia – for instance, a person's role in a community, caring for relatives, community service, memberships of associations and sporting clubs.

For the reasons listed above, the Refugee Council believes that, rather than considering limiting who can propose on the basis of employment, new programs need to be considered and implemented to help refugees into employment.

Minimum period of residence in Australia

The implementation of a minimum period of residence should not apply to applicants under the split family provision in acknowledgement of the important role family reunion has in the settlement process.

Residence in Australia for two years would be an arbitrary requirement, unrelated to a proposer's capacity to provide settlement support. This restriction, while providing no guarantee of increased ability to provide support, would instead cause significant harm to both families here and overseas, where family members may be subject to harsh and precarious situations.

Completion of financial literacy training

RCOA agrees that humanitarian entrants face difficult financial responsibilities and often feel obliged to send large proportion of their income to those loved ones who remain in refugee camps or countries of first asylum. This situation, coupled with long periods of time living at the camps under completely different circumstances, mean that they are subjected to significant financial pressure upon arrival in Australia.

RCOA would strongly support any proposal to increase the availability of and appropriateness of financial literacy training and budget planning skills for humanitarian entrants.

Limits on the frequency of proposals

The Refugee Council agrees that it is important to encourage proposers to assess realistically the level of support they can provide to humanitarian entrants. However, the Refugee Council believes that tighter guidelines on numbers of proposals could make the process harder for certain communities where things are handled differently. In some communities, for example, a leader does the proposing and fills in forms because of his/her good English language skills and the support for new arrivals is shared by community members.

It is the opinion of the Refugee Council that there should not be a blanket policy on numbers of proposals. There have been various cases where an individual proposer has sponsored several people with excellent results. The Refugee Council recommends that cases be considered on an individual basis on their own merits. It also recommends that the ability of the proposer to support the new entrant be assessed on a case-by-case basis, prioritising cases of family reunion and without establishing limits on the frequency of proposals.

Prioritising processing for applications supported by certain proposers

The Refugee Council reiterates its position that, when deciding on SHP applications, the key criterion has to be humanitarian need, rather than the perceived ability of the new entrant to integrate into Australian society. Successful settlement outcomes and effective integration are extremely important, but those in genuine humanitarian need and those seeking to reunite their families must be given priority. The creation of a preferential system based on minimum objective requirements for individual proposers and priority processing according to employment opportunities, availability of services and established links with potential employers threatens to shift the focus of the program away from humanitarian need.

Detailed information and training for proposers and entrants

The Refugee Council supports any new measures to improve the reach and appropriateness of information given to humanitarian entrants and proposers. The Refugee Council welcomes DIMA's work on improved information products to enhance the effectiveness of the SHP.

Greater use of the volunteer sector

RCOA acknowledges the key role of the voluntary and community sector in the settlement process. Voluntary and community groups have been instrumental for decades in supporting refugees and other humanitarian entrants in Australia, ensuring that the country can proudly claim to have one of the most successful settlement programs in the world. The Refugee Council welcomes the opportunity of enhanced involvement of community and volunteer groups in the SHP. We agree that volunteers have an important role to play in supporting proposers and humanitarian entrants and improving their potential for successful settlement.

According to the proposals in the discussion paper, the only way people who do not meet the minimum requirements can propose family members is by linking up with a voluntary organisation that is prepared to provide settlement support. This is a concern for a number of reasons:

- Voluntary organisations with a record of successful applications under the SHP are already under a great deal of strain and, without financial support, would not cope with the increased demand caused by the proposed changes. New strategies to involve volunteers need to take account of the heavy load already being borne by existing volunteer groups.
- Under the proposed system, priority could be given to people who link up with a community organisation over proposers who have settled well but don't (or don't wish to) link with a voluntary or community group.
- There is a risk that the most vulnerable people are not able to identify community organisations or to advocate with them to promote their cases. In practice, this situation could leave those who are most needy missing out on support. Appropriate information needs to be provided, together with an effective way of ensuring equal access to voluntary and community groups. As these organisations are voluntary, currently there is no way of ensuring the geographical spread required to enable equal access by all potential proposers subject to the new restrictions.
- The current proposal has the negative potential to put volunteer groups under unwanted pressure. Volunteer groups could end up becoming de facto selection committees and judging the merits of different potential applicants. This will inevitably change the power relationship between the volunteer group and the proposer. Volunteer leaders in the sector have expressed their concern to the Refugee Council that this will affect the dynamics of the positive interaction between community groups, proposers and entrants.
- While the majority of voluntary organisations operate with the very best of intentions, the unregulated nature of the sector means that it is neither practical nor appropriate to rely on them as the only means that some refugees and humanitarian entrants will have of reuniting with family.
- The complex nature of the current SHP caseload means that the pre-arrival experience of many entrants is no different to that of refugee program entrants. There is a need, therefore, for many SHP entrants to receive intensive settlement support that cannot be provided by the current proposers. While voluntary organisations can provide some guidance and introduction to services, they are also, in many cases, not equipped to deal with the complex issues that may arise in the course of providing settlement support. Volunteer recruitment is possible, but it is essential that volunteers are properly screened, trained, supported and debriefed. Police checks and careful supervision are also required.

An alternative model of support for Special Humanitarian Program proposers and entrants

In light of the considerations outlined above, the Refugee Council proposes an alternative model that addresses the concerns raised in the discussion paper about the limited capacity of some proposers to provide adequate support to humanitarian entrants. This model enhances the potential for successful and positive settlement outcomes for both proposers and entrants, involves voluntary and community organisations in providing support and maintains the SHP's focus on humanitarian need and the reuniting of split families.

Building a network of voluntary and NGO partners

Under RCOA's model, DIMA would invite organisations to register as either Volunteer SHP Support Groups or Specialised SHP Support Agencies.

Volunteer SHP Support Groups: Volunteer and community-based organisations would be invited to register with DIMA as support groups for SHP proposers. As part of the registration process, each volunteer group would be required to develop appropriate system of police checks, training and supervision. Volunteers' roles would be restricted to the skills for which volunteers are best suited, such as social support, encouraging new arrivals to build local connections and a limited range of practical tasks. Registered Volunteer SHP Support Groups would be provided funding by DIMA for training and the coordination of volunteers. This training would include cultural awareness, providing support within appropriate boundaries and referral processes to CCSN, IHSS, SGP and other agencies.

SHP Support Agencies: In addition, selected settlement agencies would be funded through an appropriate program (e.g. CCSN, IHSS or SGP) to provide support to SHP entrants and proposers with more complex needs. Each agency would be asked to build partnerships with registered Volunteer SHP Support Groups in their locality, so that SHP entrants and proposers could be given additional support by volunteers, at whatever level was appropriate.

The application process, partnership and review

With the networks in place, DIMA would invite all interested proposers to lodge SHP applications which would then undergo a five-step process:

Step 1 - Processing of SHP application: All SHP applications would be processed by DIMA purely on humanitarian criteria, with priority given to reuniting split families.

Step 2 - Assessment of support required: Once a SHP application has been approved, DIMA (possibly with input from external panel members) would make an assessment of what level of support the SHP entrants and their proposer needed to settle successfully, determining whether the proposer:

1. Could support the SHP entrants individually;
2. Needs a moderate level of support which could be provided by a Volunteer SHP Support Group; or
3. Needs a higher level of support which would require the involvement of a SHP Support Agency with background volunteer support.

Step 3 - Support options offered to SHP proposer: Where DIMA has determined that a proposer would benefit from the support of a volunteer group or specialist agency, DIMA would then approach the proposer to offer a number of options of organisations which could offer the

appropriate level of support, with the proposer choosing the organisation or group they would like to approach.

Step 4 - Development of Settlement Plan: Once the proposer has chosen an appropriate organisation, DIMA, the proposer and the organisation would then enter into a written agreement or a Settlement Plan (translated as required), clarifying what support would be offered through IHSS and other programs and outlining the respective rights and responsibilities of each party, in order to ensure maximum clarity before the humanitarian entrants arrive.

Step 5 - Review: This partnership would then be reviewed (with the assistance of an external party) at agreed regular intervals to ensure the partnership was working to the maximum benefit of the SHP entrant/s and the proposer.

Individual proposers who would not require volunteer or professional support would also sign up to a Settlement Plan, receive the appropriate level of IHSS support and go through the induction checklist in the same way as groups.

The advantages of this model

RCOA believes that this model has several advantages:

- It ensures that the key concerns outlined in the discussion paper about adequate scrutiny and support of SHP proposers are addressed.
- It ensures that the SHP maintains its focus on those in greatest humanitarian need, including family reunion considerations, rather than focusing solely on potential for effective settlement.
- It does not disadvantage a proposer on the basis of their personal circumstances, but ensures that the proposer gets the right level of support.
- It does not force volunteer groups into a position where they are, in effect or by default, influencing the success or failure of SHP applications.
- It provides checks and balances to ensure that the best use is made of volunteer support and that volunteers are focused on the work they can do best.
- It involves professional settlement agencies to provide targeted support where the need is greater and it encourages these agencies to work in partnership with voluntary groups, to broaden community support for the SHP proposer and entrants and to enable a transition (at an appropriate time) away from professional support to broader community-based support.

Recommendations: Part Three

Recommendation 12: The Refugee Council recommends that all SHP proposals be assessed purely on humanitarian need, with priority given to reuniting split families.

Recommendation 13: The Refugee Council recommends that DIMA develop a national network of Volunteer SHP Support Groups and specialist SHP Support Agencies, as outlined in the model above, to provide support to SHP proposers who may have difficulty meeting their responsibilities to new arrivals.

Recommendation 14: The Refugee Council recommends that DIMA adopt the five-step model proposed above, linking SHP proposers, new arrivals and voluntary or specialist agencies under appropriate Settlement Plans.