



Refugee Council
of Australia

REFUGEE COUNCIL'S SUBMISSION ON THE 2018-19 REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

Key recommendations

Expand the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 30,000 places annually

- In light of escalating global needs and the sharp decrease in resettlement places, the Department of Home Affairs should consider expanding the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 30,000 places annually or least maintain the number of places offered in 2016-17 (21,968).
- Australian settlement services have demonstrated that they have the experience, capacity and skill to resettle more refugees into our country. Considering the scale of the crisis of displacement, Australia now has an opportunity to demonstrate its international leadership in supporting the most vulnerable

Ensure that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program is based on need

- The Refugee and Humanitarian Program must be focused on resettling the most vulnerable refugees, and should not discriminate based on religion, nationality, skills, English language ability or any other attribute.
- In recent years, the numbers of refugees accepted through referrals by UNHCR have decreased substantially. The Refugee visa should be reserved for referrals through UNHCR and should comprise at least two-thirds of the Program.

Expand private refugee sponsorship program in addition to the current intake

- Substantial untapped goodwill exists in the Australian community for welcoming refugees into our communities. An opportunity exists to test the strength and support of the Australian public to increase refugee resettlement by adopting a comprehensive private sponsorship program.
- The Australian Government should replace the Community Support Program with a better model for community sponsorship for up to 10,000 places outside of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program that focuses on four key principles: the places should be in addition to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program; priority should be based on need; there should be guaranteed access to settlement services (however funded); and there should be wide community engagement.
- The Refugee Council of Australia has worked with Save the Children, Amnesty International, Rural Australians for Refugees, Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and Welcome to Australia in developing a model of community sponsorship based on the best aspects of the Canadian approach. This is outlined at www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au/resources/

Expand alternative pathways

- **Develop labour mobility programs:** Explore ways in which humanitarian entrants with marketable skills can help to fill gaps in the Australian workforce.
- **Provide education pathways:** Support tertiary and trade study opportunities that consider the protection and safety of refugee students and lead to their economic and social empowerment.
- **Keep families together:** Develop a separate Humanitarian Family Reunion Program outside of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program or enhance access to the existing family reunion program through administrative concessions and waivers for refugees.

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Establish an Emergency Response contingency quota

- The success of the resettlement of refugees from Syria and Iraq highlights the capacity and goodwill that exists in Australia for our Government's leadership on humanitarian crises.
- The establishment of an Emergency Response contingency quota over and above the annual Refugee and Refugee and Humanitarian Program intake would provide additional capacity to respond to urgent protection needs during emergency situations, such as the current crisis in Syria, the escalating violence for Rohingya people and the continued conflict in South Sudan.

Increase proportion of resettlement places from Africa

- The sharp decrease of resettlement places offered by the US will disproportionately affect refugees from Africa, who already make up 43% of the 1.2 million refugees identified by UNHCR as being in need of resettlement in 2018. Resettlement from this region should be given greater priority, with the Africa program making up at least 25% of the offshore program in 2018-19.

Develop a whole-of society National Program of Action and an integrated response to displacement

- Based on the commitments made in signing the 2016 New York Declaration, the Australian Government should work with refugee and local communities, civil society organisations, State and local governments, the private sector, media and other stakeholders to develop a whole-of-society National Program of Action.
- The Australian Government should work towards an integrated response to displacement, by convening a forum with NGOs, peak bodies, intergovernmental bodies and other relevant stakeholders. The forum should consider the roles of aid, diplomacy, capacity-building and resettlement.