Refugee Council of Australia

# 30 years of securing solutions together:

## Report on Australian engagement at the 2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

The Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) is the most important multilateral forum for UNHCR, States, NGOs, refugees, private sector representatives, and others to come together to discuss and advance resettlement issues of common interest. As the gap between global resettlement needs and available places grows, the CRCP is a forum to promote and develop new and innovative ways to solve problems and combine resources to improve resettlement and complementary pathways for refugees. Since 1995, this annual event has provided an opportunity to address a wide range of policy and procedural matters, including advocacy, capacity building and operational support.

The CRCP has a rotating country chair and involves one main Geneva-based meeting a year and at least one interim working group meeting. Interim meetings, known as the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR), focus on specific themes of interest to the CRCP network. In July 2024, Spain took over from Australia as the CRCP country chair. The 2025 CRCP meeting was held in Geneva from 25-27 June with over 350 delegates participating from around the world.

The overarching theme of the 2025 CRCP was '*30 years of securing solutions together',* an acknowledgement of the 30th anniversary of this important multi-stakeholder dialogue and the need to reflect on and learn from three decades of knowledge-sharing. Among the key questions guiding the agenda at this year's consultations included: How can we increase the number of countries participating in resettlement efforts and complementary pathways? How do we maximise the collective impact of resettlement and complementary pathways to enhance refugee protection and relieve pressure on host countries? and: What challenges do destination countries face, and lessons learned to inform discussion on solutions when supporting the integration of resettled refugees and refugees arriving through family reunification, labour, education and sponsorship pathways?

The following provides a snapshot of key takeaways and themes at the 2025 CRCP and Australian engagement in these discussions.




## Key themes and takeaways

### Significant decline in global resettlement

In 2024, 116,000 refugees resettled to 21 states through UNHCR referral; with 203,000 new submissions to 23 states made by 90 UNHCR operations. In 2025, UNHCR projected that only around 17,000 refugees would be resettled to 21 states through UNHCR-referral processes, with a possible quota of only 30,000 places for new submissions to 18 resettlement states made by 66 UNHCR operations. This represents an 85% reduction in new UNHCR-referred resettlement submissions from 2024 to 2025.[1]

[1] Note: Australia's Special Humanitarian Program and Community Support Program are not included in UNHCR data and are considered additional pathways. Global resettlement numbers that include both UNHCR- and non-UNHCR referred pathways (i.e., including SHP and Canada's private sponsorship program) are likely to be much higher.

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The Refugee Council of Australia is the national umbrella body for refugees, people seeking asylum and the organisations and individuals who support them □ Founded 1981

It was noted that it took years to reach 2024 numbers after the first Trump administration significantly cut its resettlement program in 2017, and that the second Trump administration has been far more aggressive. Unlike last time, few if any other states are rallying to fill the gap. In fact, the pause or reduction in resettlement in several European countries at the same time that the US program was brought to a sudden halt means that it is unlikely that resettlement numbers will rise again within any foreseeable timeline.

**Potential of complementary pathways**

Against this backdrop of vastly diminished resettlement places, the potential and possibilities to increase access to third country solutions through skill-based pathways (work and study), community sponsorship and family migration was discussed with more optimism. For example, the number of refugees accessing family migration pathways are set to meet the Global Refugee Forum multistakeholder pledge of reuniting 1 million refugee families by 2030. There continued to be momentum behind skill-based pathways (education visas and, especially, labour mobility), though numbers remain small. Private or community sponsorship is being discussed as a promising way to rally community support as well as combat anti-migrant narratives. New initiatives are emerging to link resettlement and complementary pathways to self-reliance activities in host countries, for example through education, training, skills-building, and train-to-hire programs.

**Integration**

As in previous years, multiple sessions focused on post-arrival settlement and integration and how to ensure refugees arriving through resettlement or a complementary pathway are welcomed and supported to find their feet. In the context of generating the social licence that governments need to continue or grow resettlement efforts and the rise of nationalist movements in many resettlement states, how well refugees are able to rebuild their lives, integrate into local communities, and contribute to their new countries held even more significance this year.

There were focused discussions that picked up from past CRCP conversations on integration in non-urban settings and questions of welcome infrastructure, models of support in smaller towns, the opportunities and challenges presented by smaller rural and regional communities as settlement locations, as well as the importance of refugees retaining agency, were discussed. A session on welcoming neighbourhoods and integration as a two-way process generated excellent examples of initiatives that work, and the importance of creating multiple pathways to support newcomers and local communities on the integration journey together.

**Other sessions**

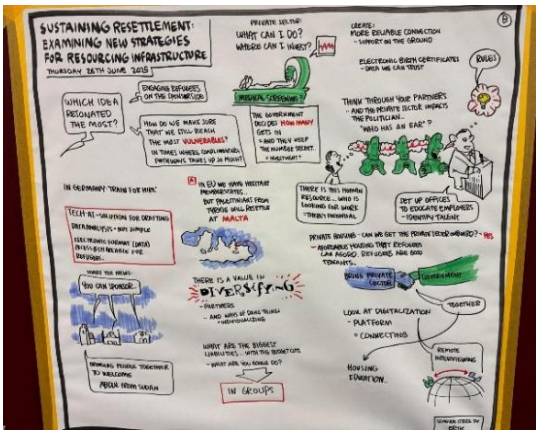
Other conversations included: how to sustain and resource resettlement, refugee resilience and integration through arts and sports, housing solutions, climate migration, resettlement of LGBTIQ+ refugees, making the most of the long waiting period for resettlement, pro bono legal support, ensuring equitable access to solutions for diverse and marginalised communities, and more.

**Global Networks and Taskforces meetings**

The annual CRCP meeting in Geneva presents an opportunity for global networks to convene face-to-face meetings in the margins of the formal CRCP meeting. This year, this included separate meetings of the Global Family Reunification Network (FRUN), Global Task Forces on Labour Mobility and Third Country Education Pathways, Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, and Global Refugee Accommodation Working Group (GRAWG).

RCOA was involved in convening a meeting of the International Refugee Integration and Settlement Exchange (IRISE) Steering Group members from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, and to use the opportunity of steering group members being in Geneva to meet with a representative of the European Share Network, a similar network focused on international knowledge-exchange on refugee integration and settlement.






Photos: (L) IRISE Steering Group members meet in the margins of the CRCP. (R) Discussions during the breakout session on sustaining resettlement were illustrated live.

## Looking to 2026

At the closing session, no new chair was named for the 2026 CRCP. This is perhaps a first and is indicative of current political challenges.

## Australian delegation and engagement

Australian delegates from government, NGOs and refugee communities were well-represented and engaged in CRCP 2025 dialogue as organisers, invited speakers and facilitators.



### A Powerful Refugee Statement

Dor Akech Achiek, Head of Settlement Services at SSI, was a key organiser of the 2025 CRCP as a representative of the CRCP Refugee Advisory Group. The CRCP Refugee Advisory Group is made up of 20 members from different countries with lived refugee experience who work alongside UNHCR and the government and NGO Co-Chairs to plan and deliver the CRCP agenda.

Dor delivered a powerful statement on behalf of refugees on the opening day, beginning with a reflection on the evidence from 30 years of resettlement dialogue that "from broken roots, new forests can grow" and that "resettlement is a lifeline – economically, socially, and morally. It uplifts not only the displaced, but also the nations that choose welcome over fear." He ended with a call to take action in "a fractured world teetering under the weight of unending armed conflicts, evolving climate disasters, rising authoritarianism and hardening of hearts and borders", reminding us that "we each have a role to play in shaping a global refugee response grounded in fairness, compassion, and shared responsibility."

### Australians in action

Across a three-day agenda involving 30 plenaries and breakout sessions, Australian experiences and expertise was shared by many delegates as organisers, facilitators, speakers and active participants intervening from the floor. Highlights included Paris Aristotle AO speaking at the opening plenary on 'Securing solutions over time: 30 years of the CRCP and beyond'. Paris reminded delegates of the incredible impact and success of resettlement and that "Australia is infinitely better off as a country because of the resettlement of refugees." Former Socceroo and human rights advocate Craig Foster joined a panel on how to change the narrative around third country solutions, speaking about his recent visit to refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and the need for a broad cross-section of society to speak up and out about the deteriorating conditions and desperate need for solutions for populations in protracted situations such as the Rohingya.





Photos: (L) Yamamah Agha (SSI) and Mohammed Yassin (Australian Refugee Advisory Panel) provide food for thought on 'Welcoming neighbourhoods: Fostering two-way integration'. (R) RCOA's Dr Graham Thom makes an intervention from the floor.

Other Australian speakers and session facilitators included:

- Sponsorship and complementary pathways: Strengthening responsibility sharing and system resilience – Lisa Button (CRSA)
- Connecting the dots: Pro bono work for third country solutions - Sarah Dale (RACS)
- Academia in practice: connecting research and policy – Dr Farida Fozdar (Curtin University)
- Operationalising the Route-Based Approach - Dor Akech Achiek (CRCP Refugee Advisory Group)
- Building roots in non-urban communities – Dr Melika Sheikh-Eldin (AMES Australia)
- Refugee resilience and integration through arts & sports - Yamamah Agha (SSI), Sagalee Omer (Shooters Shoot) and Craig Foster (human rights advocate and former Socceroo).
- Lowering barriers for all: Ensuring equitable access to solutions for diverse and marginalised communities - Rana Ebrahimi (MYAN Australia)
- Down to the facts: Monitoring, evaluating and documenting complementary pathways – Dr Louise Olliff (RCOA), Dor Akech Achiek (SSI)
- Welcoming neighbourhoods: Fostering two-way integration - Yamamah Agha (SSI), Mohammad Yassin (Australian Refugee Advisory Panel)






Photos: (L) Jalal Ahmadzai (Refugee Representative) offers insights from AMES' work supporting settlement of refugees in regional areas at a breakout session on building roots in non-urban communities. (C) Jeanne Mutaruwa (Refugee Representative) makes an intervention from the floor at the closing of Day 2. (R) Lisa Button (CRSA) speaks on the panel focused on sponsorship and complementary pathways and how to strengthen responsibility-sharing and build system resilience.

**Australian delegation**

The Australian CRCP 2025 delegation included: Yamamah Agha (SSI), Jalal Ahmadzai (Refugee Representative), Dor Akech Achiek (CRCP Refugee Advisory Group), Paris Aristotle (Foundation House), Sally Baker (Skill Path Australia), Uvi Bhati (Australian Government), Lisa Button (Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia), Sarah Dale (Refugee Advice & Casework Service), Maria Dimopoulos (Settlement Council of Australia), Renee Dixson (Forcibly Displaced People Network), Rana Ebrahimi (MYAN Australia), Craig Foster (Invited Speaker), Farida Fozdar (Curtin University), Ismail Ibrahim (Australian Red Cross), Andrew Kiley (Australian Government), Elizabeth Lang (Australian Refugee Advisory Panel), David Manne (Refugee Legal), Jeanne Mutarutwa (Refugee Representative), Louise Olliff (RCOA), Sagalee Omer (Shooters Shoot), Melika Sheikh-Eldin (AMES), Nadine Shema (CRCP Refugee Advisory Group), Graham Thom (RCOA), Laura Thomas (Australian Government), Olivia Toma (Refugee Representative), Mohammed Yassin (Australian Refugee Advisory Panel).





Photos: (L) Australian NGO delegates and refugee representatives in the main plenary; (R) Australian delegates hosted by the Australian Permanent Mission in Geneva.