

## **Refugee Council of Australia – submission summary 2018-19 Humanitarian Program**

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) consulted with over 700 people, including a wide range of organisations and communities in developing its submission. The submission focuses on international protection needs, the composition and structure of the Humanitarian Program, and includes 23 recommendations.

### **Key principles:**

- A focus on resettling the most vulnerable - non-discriminatory, needs-based resettlement as assessed by UNHCR,
- An emphasis on family reunion,
- An additional response to protection needs in large-scale emergency situations, and
- Whole-of-government strategy for refugee protection together with relevant stakeholders and civil society, bringing together diplomacy, aid, capacity-building and resettlement to address drivers of displacement.

### **Key recommendations:**

- Address priority needs, including the situations in Syria, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic,
- Allocate at minimum two-thirds of the Program to UNHCR referred Refugee visas (subclass 200),
- Urgently address the plight of Rohingya, including resettlement in Australia and a regional resettlement strategy,
- Establish a Children at Risk Program outside the Humanitarian Program,
- Establish a contingency quota for emergency responses over and above the annual Humanitarian Program intake,
- Increase the Humanitarian Program to 30,000 (or retain 21,968 as in 2016-17 including Syrian/Iraqi intake) and delink from onshore Permanent Protection Visa (PPV) grants,
- Develop a Humanitarian Family Reunion Program (10,000 places) outside the Humanitarian Program,
- Develop alternative migration pathways for refugees and their families, including opening up places in the Migration Program with enhanced access (i.e. reduced or waived VAC, no-interest loans, and flexibility in documentation), and
- Abolish Temporary Protection visas (TPVs) and remove cap on PPV grants.

### **Community Support Program (CSP):**

- Issues: allocation of CSP places within the Humanitarian Program potentially reducing places available to the most vulnerable; high costs; 'job-ready' criteria; strong focus on relationship between individuals and businesses (and risk of relationship breakdown).
- Recommendations:
  - Increase CSP size to 5,000 (growing to 10,000) outside the Humanitarian Program
  - Places allocated to those in most urgent need as well as those seeking family reunion, with priority to UNHCR referred candidates, and
  - Sponsorship groups rather than individuals – groups to raise funds to cover the costs for refugees for their first year in Australia.
    - Sponsored refugees to have access to Centrelink, but this cost covered by sponsorship group
    - RCOA proposed model to reduce the cost of sponsoring a family of five to between \$20,000 and \$50,000.