AUSTRALIA’S REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM 2017-18
Community views on current challenges and future directions

May 2017
Children wait in line for food at the Idomeni border crossing between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. People join long queues that can stretch for hundreds of meters in order to get a simple sandwich. The latest figures show that 36% of the refugees arriving in Europe in 2016 are children, and many of them have been separated from their parents.
1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE NEEDS

1.1.1 The needs are greater than ever

More people are now forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations than at any time since the end of World War II. As at 31 December 2015, more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced. Of these, 21.3 million were refugees and 3.2 million people were seeking asylum. More than half of the world’s UNHCR-mandated refugees came from just three countries: Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia. In addition, more than half of the people displaced are children.

Three key protection challenges were the focus of international discussions and action this year: the protection of children and young people; the need for local, national and global responsibility-sharing, and the response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crises.

Previous challenges identified in our annual submissions continue to be relevant today. These include:

- the need for Australia, as a wealthy nation, to do more to protect refugees and to show leadership both in the region and in the global context
- access to timely refugee status determination (RSD) procedures
- the ongoing need to find solutions for those in protracted refugee situations
- ensuring the physical security of vulnerable refugees
- preventing further instability in countries at greatest risk
- finding alternatives to immigration detention
- using refugee resettlement more strategically, and
- creating more avenues for refugees to support themselves.

Our consultations with refugee community members highlighted the challenges and dangers faced by people fleeing persecution. They described the serious risks and insecurity in their countries of origin, and the barriers to securing effective protection and accessing durable solutions in countries of asylum.

1.1.2 What should be done?

They identified a range of strategies other than resettlement which Australia could adopt to address key protection issues or enhance existing responses, including aid initiatives, international advocacy and regional cooperation.

For many refugees, resettlement is a highly appropriate solution. However, there are far too few resettlement places available. Fewer than 1% of the refugees under UNHCR’s mandate get access to resettlement each year. Of those identified conservatively by UNHCR as being in need of resettlement, more than 85% are not resettled. This situation will also be seriously affected by the US Government’s considerable reduction in resettlement places in the coming years.

How should we make the most effective use of this small number of resettlement places? Discussions at home and abroad highlight the importance of:

- resettling the most vulnerable
- opening up other resettlement opportunities
- maintaining a balance between current emergences and protracted situations
- using resettlement as a means of sharing the responsibility for refugee protection more equitably, and
- exploring ways to use resettlement as a strategic tool to improve protection for those who are not resettled.

In our annual submission over the past five years, RCOA has outlined seven principles for the Australian Government’s response, based on feedback from community consultations. Responding
to community views that the scale of the Syrian crisis requires an additional response, we offer seven principles relevant for the planning of the 2017-18 Refugee and Humanitarian Program:

- The need for resettlement to be made widely available as a durable solution
- A focus on resettling the most vulnerable
- An emphasis on maintaining family unity
- The strategic use of resettlement to promote broader refugee protection
- The need to balance resettlement needs in different regions
- An additional response to protection needs in large-scale emergency situations, and
- A coherent overarching government strategy for refugee protection

1.2 AUSTRALIA’S REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

1.2.1 Size of the Program

At a time of overwhelming need, Australia can and should do more by increasing its intake of people under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This was the overwhelming view of participants in our consultations.

The additional intake of people from Syria and Iraq in 2016-2017 demonstrates that Australia has the capacity to resettle 22,000 people in one year. Despite the ongoing need and indeed the escalation of conflict in the past year, this is scheduled to drop back to 16,250 places in 2017-18.

Sustaining a higher intake is not only the right thing to do, but will be more efficient and effective for those who are resettled. Service providers highlighted that significant fluctuations in the intake disrupts service delivery and imposes costs on organisations. Instead, participants recommended that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program continue to increase at a consistent level.

1.2.2 Composition of the Program

Participants expressed concerns that certain countries and backgrounds were underrepresented, and that there was too much focus on resettling those with community links in Australia. This was the result of an increased reliance on the Special Humanitarian Program and the requirement that those resettled through the program have links to the Australian community. This means that those who are particularly vulnerable and are without community links to Australia are unable to access resettlement.

The emphasis on resettling people with community links has also seen more people settling in metropolitan areas, while regional areas face dwindling arrivals. Concern was also expressed that refugee crises other than from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq were being neglected.

Participants also called for a separate Children at Risk program for unaccompanied minors and other children at risk with their families. Australia is well placed to resettle unaccompanied minors, with the Unaccompanied Humanitarian Program already established to support young people.

1.2.3 Other pathways to protection

As in previous years, concern was expressed with the high cost of the Community Proposal Pilot and its allocation of places falling within the existing Refugee and Humanitarian Program. With the expansion of the program and the development of the Community Support Program, participants called for the program to be separated from the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and the Refugee Program.

Participants also called for the Department to consider alternative funding models. Participants highlighted the success of the Canadian private sponsorship program, and called for the Australian Government to follow Canada’s lead in resettling over 15,000 privately sponsored refugees in a year.

There were also calls for the Australian Government to explore alternative pathways to protection, including the use of skilled and student visas for people from refugee backgrounds. These alternatives could be developed through existing visa systems, or through the Community Support
Program. However, those consulted stressed the importance of ensuring that such alternative pathways add to, rather than substitute for, the places in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Family reunion remained one of the most pressing issues for refugee communities in Australia. Participants highlighted barriers to family reunion, including lengthy delays, high costs, and difficulties affording migration agents. The discriminatory restrictions on family reunion for people who arrived by boat was highlighted across Australia, with participants expressing concern about extended delays in gaining citizenship for this group of people.

Finally, significant concern was expressed across Australia regarding Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas. Participants noted the detrimental impact the insecurity created by these visas has on people’s ability to settle in Australia, including on their mental health.

2 LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: A strategic framework for resettlement

The Australian Government should develop, publish and implement a framework for Australia’s refugee resettlement program based on:

a) priority resettlement to the most vulnerable refugees, including women at risk, children at risk, culturally isolated groups of refugees (e.g. small groups of African refugees in South and South-East Asia), LGBTI refugees and other minorities at risk

b) the promotion of family unity

c) the strategic use of resettlement, and

d) the consideration of global resettlement needs in the development of regional allocations.

Recommendation 2: Increasing resettlement from Africa

In view of pressing needs across the African continent, the Australian Government should ensure that the 2017-18 regional target for resettlement from Africa be set at no lower than 25% of the offshore program.

Recommendation 3: Urgently addressing the plight of the Rohingya

The Australian Government should urgently increase the number of places available to Rohingya refugees, as a first step. It should also work with other resettlement states and the Governments of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand to develop a regional strategy for facilitating resettlement and brokering other durable solutions for Rohingya refugees, including through reinstating resettlement from Bangladesh.

Recommendation 4: Fund protection efforts overseas and in our region

The Australian Government should:

a) in light of the crucial role of aid in assisting forcibly displaced people, restore Australia’s overseas aid program to its former level and develop a plan to increase overseas aid to 0.7% of Gross National Income

b) work with diaspora communities in Australia and people living in refugee communities overseas to identify urgent protection needs in countries of origin and asylum and develop and implement strategies to respond to these needs, and

c) provide additional funding to UNHCR, given the increasing numbers of displaced people worldwide and UNHCR’s critical role in coordinating humanitarian responses to displacement.
Recommendation 5:  Develop a whole-of-government approach to promoting protection

The Australian Government should develop a cross-portfolio approach to promoting the protection of refugees and working with other states to explore options to promote:

a) peace in countries of origin, particularly states from which the number of refugees and asylum seekers is increasing (e.g. Pakistan, Burma)

b) reconciliation processes in countries where there is movement towards peace and possibilities for the eventual safe voluntary return of refugees (e.g. Burma, Sri Lanka)

c) access to some form of legal status, alternatives to detention, work rights, education and health for refugees in countries of asylum, particularly in South East Asia, and

d) cooperation between resettlement states which even more actively engages with host states on other forms of durable solutions.

Recommendation 6: Convene a forum to advance integrated response to displacement

The Australian Government should convene a forum with NGOs, peak bodies, intergovernmental bodies and other relevant stakeholders to advance the development of this integrated response to displacement, including consideration of the roles of aid, diplomacy, capacity-building and resettlement.

Recommendation 7: Provide international leadership on displacement

The Australian Government should, as part of its bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, provide positive leadership in international action to:

a) address the drivers of forced displacement and respond to protection needs in countries of asylum, with a particular focus on refugees living in protracted situations and/or facing serious risks to their lives and freedom; and

b) develop a comprehensive response to the growing Syrian refugee crisis.

Recommendation 8: Revive the Regional Cooperation Framework

The Australian Government should, in its capacity as co-chair of the Bali Process, revive efforts to operationalise the Regional Cooperation Framework agreed to by Bali Process members in March 2011.

Recommendation 9: Establish a contingency quota for emergency responses

The Australian Government should establish an Emergency Response contingency quota over and above the annual Refugee and Humanitarian Program intake to 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.

Recommendation 10: Restore the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places

RCOA recommends that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program be immediately restored to 20,000 places annually, delinked from onshore permanent Protection Visa grants.

Recommendation 11: Expand the Refugee and Humanitarian Program in light of needs

The Australian Government should, in light of escalating global protection needs, consider further expanding the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 30,000 places annually.
Recommendation 12: Introduce a program to protect children at risk

The Australian Government should, in consultation with key stakeholders, increase its resettlement capacity for children and adolescents at risk by establishing a Children At Risk program. The program could use Australia’s existing systems to receive and support children and adolescents at risk.

Recommendation 13: Conduct routine needs assessments for people settling

All Special Humanitarian Program visa holders should receive routine needs assessments during the initial period of settlement to ensure that they are receiving adequate on-arrival support.

Recommendation 14: Review practice of encouraging Special Humanitarian Program visas

The Australian Government should review its practice of encouraging refugees who are eligible for resettlement in Australia to apply for Special Humanitarian Program visas rather than Refugee visas, so as to avoid undermining the successful settlement of new arrivals.

Recommendation 15: Review communications with visa applicants and proposers

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection should review its procedures for communicating with visa proposers and applicants to ensure that clear information and updates are regularly provided on progress with the processing of applications.

Recommendation 16: Significantly reduce cost of the Community Support Program

The upfront cost of the Community Support Program should be significantly.

Recommendation 17: Set quota for Community Support Program outside the existing Program

The annual quota for the Community Support Program should be separate from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Recommendation 18: Fund support in case of breakdown of relationship under CSP

Funding should be made available for support services for people proposed under the Community Support Program in cases of emergency or relationship breakdown.

Recommendation 19: Develop a humanitarian family reunion program

The Australian Government should develop a separate Humanitarian Family Reunion Program, outside of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and Migration Program. This should be developed in consultation with former refugee community members and organisations, peak bodies and relevant service providers.

Recommendation 20: Enhance access to family reunion

In the absence of a separate Humanitarian Family Reunion Program, the Australian Government should enhance refugee and humanitarian entrants’ access to family reunion by:

a) considering applications lodged by people who are not formally registered as refugees with UNHCR or host governments but otherwise meet the eligibility criteria

b) waiving application fees or at least introducing application fee concessions for refugee and humanitarian entrants sponsoring family members under the family stream of the Migration Program
c) expanding the availability of no-interest loans to assist proposers in meeting the costs of airfares and/or application fees

d) introducing greater flexibility in documentation and evidence requirements under both the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and the family stream of the Migration Program

e) reviewing eligibility requirements under the family stream of the Migration Program which effectively exclude applicants from refugee backgrounds

f) prioritising processing of family members at immediate risk, and

g) ensuring access to settlement services on arrival and exempting family from the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period.

The Australian Government should consult with stakeholders to develop a process for assessing eligibility for concessions. There should be consultation with refugee communities, practitioners involved in providing support with family reunion applications and other relevant stakeholders to develop a process for assessing eligibility for the concessions referred to above.

**Recommendation 21: Remove restrictions on family reunion for those who come by boat**

Current restrictions on access to family reunion opportunities for Protection Visa holders who arrived by boat (including changes to processing priorities) be immediately removed.

If the above recommendation is not implemented, people whose applications have been affected by the introduction of retrospective changes to processing priorities be given the opportunity to withdraw their applications and receive a full refund of application fees.

**Recommendation 22: Identify families in need of reunification**

The Australian Government should enter into dialogue with UNHCR about establishing a process for identifying refugee families that are seeking reunification, facilitating assessment and registration in countries of asylum and prioritising them for referral for resettlement under Australia’s offshore program.

**Recommendation 23: Restore funding for migration advice**

The Australian Government should restore funding for professional migration advice services under the Settlement Grants program to support refugee and humanitarian entrants in lodging family reunion applications.

**Recommendation 24: Alternative migration pathways**

RCOA recommends that, in conjunction with refugee community members, industry advisors, and service delivery organisations, the Australian Government develop a suite of alternative migration pathways for people to receive protection via other migration products or processes. These alternative pathways must be in addition to and not in place of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

**Recommendation 25: Abolish temporary protection visas**

The Australian Government should abolish Temporary Protection Visas and grant permanent visas to all people who currently hold Temporary Protection, Temporary Humanitarian Concern or Temporary Safe Haven visas.

If this recommendation is not implemented:

a) All temporary protection visa holders be granted access to settlement services on the same basis as permanent refugee and humanitarian visa holders.
b) Transitional support provided under the Status Resolution Support Services program following the grant of a Temporary Protection Visa should be extended to at least six weeks, with extensions available on a needs basis.

c) Overseas travel restrictions should be lifted.

d) Family reunion options should be considered.

e) The Department of Immigration and Border Protection should develop a comprehensive communications strategy to explain the implications of temporary protection visas to both visa holders and service providers.

f) The Australian Government should consider options for designating certain industries in any location as fulfilling the eligibility criteria for the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa.
3INTRODUCTION

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) welcomes the opportunity to provide community views on current and future challenges for Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program in 2017-18.

3.1 VIEWS REFLECTED IN THIS SUBMISSION

This submission is informed by the ideas and expertise of individuals and organisations from across Australia — people who have settled here having survived the refugee journey, those who have applied for protection, and those who support them.

For more than 25 years, the Department of Immigration had funded RCOA to gather community views on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This funding arrangement ceased in 2015.

Thanks to the contribution of our members and supporters, RCOA has itself funded a broad national consultation to inform this and other submissions that we make to the Australian Government. Between July to December 2016, we conducted 63 face-to-face consultations with service providers and members of refugee communities across all states and territories of Australia, including 11 in regional areas. We held 12 consultations targeting particular groups, including women, young people, people seeking asylum, and specific refugee communities. We also held two national teleconferences focusing on mental health issues and on regional and rural settlement. We also received 4 written submissions and 41 survey responses.

In total, we spoke to over 600 people, including a wide range of organisations and communities. The Appendix to this submission lists this year’s consultations. We would also like to thank the 28 organisations that hosted these consultations for us, and the small army of volunteers who helped us transcribe the notes. These are also listed in the Appendix.

We believe strongly that the insights and views of those participants are both necessary and valuable in the consideration of Australia’s contribution to protection, in Australia and overseas. We will be using this information to inform our core policy work, including reports and submissions.

This submission focuses on international refugee needs, and the composition and the structure of Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program.
4 INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE NEEDS

4.1 GLOBAL REFUGEE TRENDS

Refugees, who by definition flee problems, have been turned into the problem, with barriers raised to prevent them from arriving without prior permission. In the process, some of the ethical and legal underpinnings of asylum and the 1951 Refugee Convention have been lost. Were one to take such an approach to its logical conclusion and apply it everywhere around the world, I cannot imagine how refugees would ever be able to access safety anywhere. In fact, taken to its extreme, it would render the very notion of refugee protection obsolete.

— Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), address to the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, University of New South Wales

More people are now forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations than at any time since the end of World War II. As at 31 December 2015, more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced. Of these, 21.3 million were refugees and 3.2 million people were seeking asylum. More than half of the world’s UNHCR-mandated refugees came from just three countries: Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia. In addition, more than half of the people displaced are children.

Table 1: Forcibly displaced people, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forcibly displaced people</th>
<th>Number displaced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>21.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees under UNHCR’s mandate</td>
<td>16.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian refugees under UNRWA’s mandate</td>
<td>5.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum seekers</td>
<td>3.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally displaced people</td>
<td>37.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65.3 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Of the 12.4 million people newly displaced in 2015, 1.8 million were refugees. On average, 34,000 people per day were forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution during 2015: that is 24 people per minute every single day. Developing countries continue to host most of the world’s refugees, with 9 out of every 10 refugees residing in developing countries in 2015 (compared to 70% a decade ago).

The number of unaccompanied or separated children who applied for asylum worldwide almost tripled, from 34,300 children in 2014 to 98,400 during 2015. UNHCR’s data show that the global population of forcibly displaced people today is larger than the entire population of the United Kingdom. If they were a country, the forcibly displaced would be the 21st largest in the world.

Table 2: Top ten countries of origin and asylum, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>4.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>778,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DR of Congo</td>
<td>667,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Central African Rep.</td>
<td>617,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Burma (Myanmar)</td>
<td>511,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>474,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>347,145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country of asylum</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Islamic Rep. of Iran</td>
<td>979,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>736,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>664,100</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>512,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DR of Congo</td>
<td>384,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>372,529</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Securing durable solutions for refugees remains an ongoing challenge. Only 201,400 refugees returned home voluntarily during 2015. Approximately 107,100 people were resettled, a fraction of the 1,190,000 refugees estimated by UNHCR as needing resettlement. Most of the refugees under UNHCR's mandate — 6.7 million people — are living in protracted situations with little prospect of a solution in the near future.

The major displacement crises in the Middle East, Africa and Central America worsened considerably during 2015:

- Around one million refugees were newly displaced from Syria into neighbouring countries, with most arriving in Turkey (946,800 people registered in the past year alone). Turkey now hosts over 2.54 million refugees. The number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa grew from 3,214,466 on 31 December 2014 to 5,022,371 by April 2017.
- The deteriorating situation in Yemen left over 2.5 million people internally displaced and 169,900 individuals fleeing to neighbouring countries. Almost 10% of Yemen’s total population has been displaced, many of them children. Over 267,000 refugees from other countries (mainly Somalia) were trapped by the increasing conflict. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen has left millions of people — most of them children — facing starvation.
- Violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras worsened, forcing thousands to flee in 2015. People seeking asylum and registered refugees increased from 20,900 people in 2012 to 109,800 people in 2015. Although these numbers are far smaller than some of the refugee crises in Africa and the Middle East, they represent a more than fivefold increase in just three years.
- The outbreak of conflict in Burundi forced 221,600 individuals to flee their country during 2015, becoming the second most common country of origin for new refugees. With 162,100 people fleeing in 2015, South Sudan was the country with third-largest number of newly displaced refugees.

It is also worth noting that the fourth-largest group of newly displaced refugees (148,400 people) originated from Ukraine, mainly due to the renewed conflict and continued tensions in the eastern part of the country.

At the end of 2015, there were 107,100 resettlement places offered — representing just 0.66% of the then 16.1 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate. In other words, at the current rate, it would take almost 150 years for all refugees under UNHCR’s mandate to be resettled. This paltry resettlement number highlights the myth of any so-called resettlement ‘queue’.

Within this small number of resettlement places, Australia offered 9,399 refugees the chance to be resettled in Australia — less than 10% of permanent global resettlement places but ranking third overall in resettling refugees, behind the USA and Canada. In per capita terms, Australia fell from first to fourth for the resettlement of refugees from their country of asylum, after Canada, Norway and Liechtenstein. In 2015, Australia resettled just 0.06% of all those that require protection.

### 4.2 REFUGEE PROTECTION CHALLENGES

*Solidarity is essential to the effective functioning of the international protection regime. It is a fundamental value behind any form of international cooperation and is a crucial part of the contract between and among nations, large and small, and irrespective of the resources at their disposal.*

— Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Türk, UNHCR, at the 67th plenary session of the Executive Committee

In 2016, the record level of people forcibly displaced worldwide led to several high-level meetings, forums and summits. In September 2016, both the United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants and the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees hosted by US President Obama re-emphasised the urgent need for international cooperation.
Three key protection challenges were the focus of international discussions and action this year: the protection of children and young people; the need for local, national and global responsibility-sharing, and the response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crises.

Previous challenges identified in our annual submissions continue to be relevant today. These include:

- the need for Australia, as a wealthy nation, to do more to protect refugees and to show leadership both in the region and in the global context
- access to timely refugee status determination (RSD) procedures
- the ongoing need to find solutions for those in protracted refugee situations
- ensuring the physical security of vulnerable refugees
- preventing further instability in countries at greatest risk
- finding alternatives to immigration detention
- using refugee resettlement more strategically, and
- creating more avenues for refugees to support themselves.

4.2.1 International summits

There have been a series of international summits in the past year focusing or affecting refugees, including the World Humanitarian Summit and pledging conferences on the Syrian/Iraqi humanitarian crisis.

Most significantly, the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants was held in New York on 19 September 2016. More than 150 government and non-government representatives gathered to adopt a framework to address the large-scale displacement and movement of people across the globe. The key focus of the meeting was the shared responsibility of states for providing funding and resources to facilitate durable solutions to mass migration and refugee movement. State leaders were expected to make commitments towards increasing their intake of people and providing adequate services for resettlement.

The non-binding declaration (the New York Declaration) that was adopted at the Summit contains agreements that, as members of the global community, States must work cooperatively to address the global issues resulting from the movement of people. The document calls for:

- greater support for host countries and the principle of non-refoulement
- an end to racism and discrimination being directed at migrants and refugees
- increased efforts to stabilise countries in conflict, and
- adherence to international human rights norms and laws.

The Declaration states that providing education, healthcare, access to justice and language training is fundamental to inclusive settlement, and affirms that government policies must reflect this commitment. A step towards international co-operation and global responsibility was achieved at the Summit when an agreement was signed to partner the International Organization for Migration with the UN system.

The Declaration also committed States to working together to develop two Global Compacts, on Refugees and Migration respectively. The Declaration also placed UNHCR in charge of developing a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). States and the UN have welcomed these moves as important steps towards greater global coherence, both in terms of policy and practice, although there remain many challenges ahead.

Global leaders who attended the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, convened by then US President Barack Obama on 20 September 2016, announced more concrete commitments to address the issues of displacement and resettlement. Together, states attending the summit have announced

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5 http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit
that they will increase humanitarian aid by $4.5 billion, with Australia offering $130 million over the next three years for peace-building and refugee assistance.\(^8\)

At the time, the coalition of states attending the Summit promised to double the number of resettlement places for refugees. Australia has offered to maintain our Refugee and Humanitarian Program at the increased level of 18,750 places from 2018-19 onwards, with a number of places set aside for refugees from Central America. Australia will also dedicate a minimum number of places over the next three years to displaced people from specific protracted refugee situations. It will also expand the existing Community Proposal Pilot (CPP) from 500 to 1,000 places under a Community Support Program. Under this program, communities and businesses can sponsor applications and support new arrivals.

### 4.2.2 US election

After the September 2016 Summits, there was a sense of renewed energy and purpose towards a collective, global response to refugee protection needs. However, the election of a new United States President more recently has raised questions about the role of the US in the global compact and in refugee protection more broadly.

President Trump’s Executive Order on 27 January 2017 suspended the refugee resettlement program for 120 days and barred Syrian refugees from resettlement in the US indefinitely.\(^9\) The order also barred entry to the United States for nationals of seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. This action was in stark contrast to the commitments made at the Summits just months before.

A series of court orders halted the enforcement of the Executive Order and a subsequent new order was released on 6 March 2017.\(^10\) The new Executive Order continued the exclusion of visas for people from six of the seven countries, with special permissions to be made for people from Iraq. The suspension of the United States Refugee Admissions Program will remain in place for 120 days after the effective date of the order.

The explanation of the suspension of the refugee resettlement program was the need for increased scrutiny over the screening and vetting systems. The US currently has a strict screening process — most often taking 24 months for individuals and families in dangerous situations to complete — so it is unclear what additional procedures will be put in place.

Significantly, the latest Executive Order also limits the total number of resettlement places to the USA for the fiscal year in 2017 to 50,000 places, more than halving the 110,000 places established by the previous Obama administration. This will drastically cut the number of global resettlement places and means that UNHCR’s planned referrals for 2017 (170,000) will not be able to be met.

### 4.2.3 Protection of children

With the number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum at its highest ever level — more than 98,000 children in North America and Europe — UNHCR is focusing attention on strategies to support children on the move. UNHCR’s 2016 High Commissioner’s Dialogue in Geneva in December examined why children move, their survival mechanisms and what to do to address this increasing movement.

The Dialogue provided a unique opportunity for refugee children and young people to make their voices heard at the global level, including three youth delegates from Australia. Youth delegates made a strong call to the international community to listen to them and include them in the solutions.

The Dialogue concluded with several key recommendations. UNHCR and States recognised the importance in seeing children as children, regardless of their migratory status. It was agreed that children on the move should not be viewed as a threat, but should be approached with an ethic of

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care and protection. While children are protected through international human rights instruments, there is a vital need to ensure the implementation of practical rights for children, including:

- Ending immigration detention of children and implementing alternatives to detention, including through increased engagement with UNHCR's ‘Beyond detention strategy’
- Ending childhood statelessness and ensuring documentation and birth registration for all children
- Facilitating family reunification and actively pursuing clear pathways to comprehensive solutions in a timely manner for today’s refugee children and youth
- Ensuring access to education and learning opportunities for children on the move
- Strengthening national child protection systems that are inclusive of all children on the territory of a State
- Increasing regional and cross-national cooperation in relation to child protection
- Increasing international cooperation and sustained multi-year financial support to strengthen the capacity of State and non-governmental actors to protect and provide services for children on the move, particularly in the case of large scale movements where national capacities may need additional support
- Exploring greater private sector engagement, including to consider new and different approaches
- Recognising the value of the participation of children and youth in policy and decision-making, and
- Developing more reliable sources of data.

At the Dialogue, Australia highlighted its role in releasing children from detention and its contribution to refugee protection through resettlement. However, non-government organisations (NGOs) and delegates expressed concern with Australia’s policies towards children and young people, including the continuation of offshore processing, the restrictive policies on access to education for those seeking asylum, and the significant barriers to family reunion, especially for children who have been separated from their families.

There was significant interest at the Dialogue in resettling children at risk, including recognition of the UK Government’s decision to resettle 3,000 people from the Middle East and North Africa region under a new Children at Risk program. The program will resettle not only unaccompanied children but also children being accompanied by parents or guardians.

This reflects UNHCR’s position that the definition of children at risk must be broader than that of unaccompanied children. UNHCR believes it is important to consider the best interests of the children, family unity options, the question of local integration and the child’s own views before making a decision about resettlement. If resettlement is chosen, consideration must be given to what will happen to the family. UNHCR is concerned that, if it focuses only on resettling unaccompanied children, it will create the circumstances in which families believe their children need to be separated from them in order to get access to resettlement.

4.2.4 Global response to the Syrian crisis

UNHCR’s March 2016 high-level conference on Syrian resettlement prompted pledges of around 15,000 new places. As of April 2016, the overall total of places cumulatively offered for Syrian refugees was 201,049. In addition, up to 72,000 Syrians will be admitted to the European Union from Turkey.

The focus on Syrian resettlement has resulted in some encouraging increases in global resettlement programs — although still short of that hoped for by UNHCR. The US originally pledged to increase its overall annual resettlement target to 100,000 in the 2017 fiscal year (from 70,000 in 2015 and 85,000 in 2016). Australia’s increase in its annual refugee program to 18,750 places in 2018-19 will, with the additional one-off allocation of 12,000 places, see up to 74,500 places over four years.

Canada will resettle 44,000 Syrian refugees in 2016, with a yet-to-be determined additional number of refugees from other countries. Despite the large numbers of refugees who have sought asylum there, Sweden plans to increase its resettlement program to up to 5,000 a year by 2018. Romania
is considering up to 80 new resettlement places (number and nationality to be confirmed). During the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR), Argentina announced plans to re-establish its resettlement program, matching a previous pledge from its neighbour Chile to do the same, both countries offering places for Syrian refugees. The United Kingdom committed in April to resettle children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa region. Other resettlement pledges included 1,980 places in France and 725 in Spain.

4.2.5 Atrocities against the Rohingya

Tragically, there has been a significant escalation of violence against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State, Burma (Myanmar) in 2016. In October 2016, three border posts along the Burmese border with Bangladesh were attacked and 10 Burmese police officers were killed. Police held the Rohingya responsible for the attacks. This resulted in violence perpetrated by the armed forces and Rakhine Buddhist villagers against the entire Rohingya population in what the United Nations called “a calculated policy of terror”.11

This escalation mirrors the violent history of the Rohingya people. The Rohingya have suffered brutal oppression and official discrimination since the country’s current rulers took power in 1962. In 1982, Burma’s Citizenship Law excluded the Rohingya from Burmese citizenship, making them stateless. The Government forbids the use of the term ‘Rohingya’, refers to them as ‘Bengali’ and promotes the view that they have no right to be in Burma, despite historical evidence linking Rohingya with the Arakan region as far back as the 8th century.

UNHCR estimates the number of stateless Rohingya within Myanmar at over 900,000.12 However, in 2013 Burma’s Minister for Immigration and Population said there were 1.33 million Rohingya in the country, 1.08 million of them in Rakhine state and only 40,000 with citizenship.13

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report14 in February 2017 that gave evidence of the murder of children, killings at close range, people being beaten, shot and burnt to death, gang rape, sexual violence and physical and psychological torture being perpetrated against the Rohingya by military forces in Burma.

4.2.6 Displacement from South Sudan

The last year has also seen a significant increase in displacement from South Sudan, with the renewal of conflict following the failure of a peace agreement. Intense fighting in Juba in July 2016 led to more than 36,000 people seeking refuge in UN and aid organisation compounds. The violence quickly spread as the Government pursued suspected opposition members. The fighting has plunged the country into a severe economic crisis, and created unprecedented hunger, with the UN declaring a famine in parts of the country on 20 February 2017. More than 7 million people are estimated to need urgent humanitarian assistance and protection.15

This combination is now causing the world’s fastest growing refugee crisis, with nearly 1.6 million refugees displaced since 15 December 2013.16 Since July 2016, more than half a million have come to Uganda alone, which is receiving most refugees. Uganda has agreed to champion the CRRF, along with five other countries, but without urgent and large-scale support these efforts are at real

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risk of failing. Funding for South Sudanese in the region is 8% of the required $781 million, and UNHCR’s own funding appeal for Uganda is short by more than a quarter of a billion dollars.17

4.2.7 Protection concerns discussed in global resettlement dialogue

At the 2016 ATCR in Geneva, Switzerland, more than 200 representatives of UNHCR, IOM, governments of 30 nations and NGOs involved in refugee resettlement gathered to discuss international cooperation on refugee resettlement.18

The three-day meeting focused on a series of themes, including:

- Trends in resettlement and resettlement needs in the coming year
- The international response to UNHCR’s appeal for resettlement places for Syrian refugees and alternative admission pathways for Syrian refugees under other migration programs
- Highlighting the need to continue resettlement from other protracted refugee situations and to use resettlement strategically in these situations to support other durable solutions
- Exploring options to increase access to resettlement and other durable solutions for children at risk, both unaccompanied children and those still with parents or guardians
- Continuing resettlement of refugees caught in conflict zones
- Strengthening public confidence in refugee resettlement, and
- Enhancing the success of refugees after arrival in countries of resettlement, including through supporting their economic participation and assisting the effective integration of refugee young people.

The NGO delegates at the ATCR, representing civil society in 19 countries, put forward a joint statement in which they:

- Called for a significant increase in refugee resettlement, seeking greater pledges from governments in the lead-up to the US-led High Level Meeting on the refugee crisis on 20 September 2016
- Emphasised the need for resettlement places to be supplemented by alternative or complementary migration pathways for refugees
- Condemned the EU-Turkey deal to turn back refugees attempting to enter Europe and expressed concern about the Government of Kenya’s plans to close refugee camps
- Emphasised the need for resettlement of refugees from South-East Asia to have a much stronger strategic focus, with resettlement states also working to help develop options for safe voluntary return and local integration of refugees, and
- Drew attention to the crucial nature of quality post-arrival support programs for resettled refugees, to enhance their opportunities for success.

4.2.8 The desperate need for more resettlement places

During 2015, 81,893 refugees from 70 countries of origin were resettled from 84 countries of asylum to 30 countries of resettlement through UNHCR’s referral processes. This figure does not include another 25,158 refugees resettled during the year by states without UNHCR making the initial referral.

UNHCR’s 2015 Global Trends report records 107,051 refugee arrivals in resettlement states, based on statistics provided by those states. As Table 4 illustrates, the number of resettlement departures of UNHCR-referred refugees was 11% higher than in 2014. The number of submissions for resettlement from UNHCR to states increased in 2015 by 29% on the previous year.

In 2015, the largest resettlement programs were from Malaysia, Turkey, Lebanon, Thailand and Nepal with the main beneficiaries of resettlement being refugees from Burma, Syria, Democratic

Republic of Congo, Somalia and Iraq. The key resettlement states were USA, Canada, Australia, Norway and Germany.

**Table 3: Resettlement arrivals, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of resettlement</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>66,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>20,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>9,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107,051</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For many refugees, resettlement is a highly appropriate solution to protracted displacement for many refugees but there are far too few resettlement places available for the millions of refugees who need them.

As the following table illustrates, fewer than 1% of the refugees under UNHCR’s mandate get access to resettlement annually. Each year, UNHCR produces an estimate of global resettlement needs in a report prepared for each ATCR. Of those identified in UNHCR’s conservative estimates as being in need of resettlement, more than 85% are not resettled.

**Table 4: Availability of resettlement places compared to resettlement need**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees under UNHCR's mandate at year end</td>
<td>10,549,686</td>
<td>10,404,806</td>
<td>10,500,241</td>
<td>11,703,179</td>
<td>14,380,094</td>
<td>16,121,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified by UNHCR as being in need of resettlement in that year</td>
<td>747,468</td>
<td>805,535</td>
<td>781,299</td>
<td>859,305</td>
<td>690,915</td>
<td>958,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettled under UNHCR and other programs</td>
<td>98,761</td>
<td>79,784</td>
<td>88,578</td>
<td>98,426</td>
<td>105,197</td>
<td>107,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettlement as proportion of total refugee population</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettlement as proportion of identified resettlement need</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR Global Trends series, UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs series

The lack of access to effective and long-term integration in the countries where refugees are first recognised means that UNHCR feels the need to refer refugees for resettlement from many different countries.
### Table 5: Summary of resettlement statistics (through UNHCR referral only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR resettlement submissions&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>134,044</td>
<td>103,890</td>
<td>92,915</td>
<td>74,840</td>
<td>91,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettlement departures</td>
<td>81,893</td>
<td>73,608</td>
<td>71,449</td>
<td>69,252</td>
<td>61,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries of asylum</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries of origin</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries of resettlement</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR’s Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017

In 2015, the largest resettlement programs were from Malaysia, Turkey, Lebanon and Thailand, with the main beneficiaries of resettlement being refugees from Burma (Myanmar), Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. As in previous years, the key resettlement states for UNHCR referrals were the USA, Canada and Australia, with Norway increasing its program from previous years. Most of the 30 countries to which refugees were referred by UNHCR received fewer than 500 resettled refugees.

### Table 6: Top 10: UNHCR-referred resettlement departures, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Refugees resettled</th>
<th>Country of asylum</th>
<th>Refugees resettled</th>
<th>Country of resettlement</th>
<th>Refugees resettled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Burma (Myanmar)</td>
<td>18,503</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>12,547</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>52,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>13,816</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>7,577</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>10,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dem. Rep. Congo</td>
<td>10,701</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>7,109</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>5,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>8,406</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>6,716</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>7,590</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>6,646</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>12,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>6,332</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>6,331</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>3,412</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>5,001</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>2,533</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>3,815</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2,297</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2,991</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2,924</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All others</td>
<td>6,211</td>
<td>All others</td>
<td>20,236</td>
<td>All others</td>
<td>3,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>81,893</td>
<td>81,893</td>
<td>81,893</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2.9 Global resettlement needs in 2017

The crises in Syria and Iraq and the increasing conflicts in Africa have led to a substantial increase in the number of refugees UNHCR has identified as being in priority need of resettlement in 2015. In its Projected Global Resettlement Needs report for 2017, UNHCR estimates that over 1.19 million refugees are in need of resettlement — more than any previous year. However, as the number of resettlement places available in 2017 is expected to be less than 10% of this number, UNHCR will aim to submit 170,000 refugees for resettlement during the year (as Table 7 illustrates below).

This compares to the 2016 target of 143,000 and around 134,000 submissions in 2015 and 104,000 in 2014. Of those identified as being in need of resettlement in 2017, 40% are Syrians, 11% are Sudanese, 10% are Afghan and 9% are from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

<sup>19</sup> The number of resettlement submissions from UNHCR to states, and the number of refugees departed reflect the number of persons involved rather than cases or families.
Table 7: UNHCR projected global resettlement needs, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region or sub-region of asylum</th>
<th>Total 2017 projected resettlement needs</th>
<th>UNHCR submissions planned for 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Africa and Great Lakes</td>
<td>128,643</td>
<td>17,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East and Horn of Africa</td>
<td>262,718</td>
<td>30,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>30,865</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>19,297</td>
<td>2,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa total</td>
<td>441,523</td>
<td>55,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas total</td>
<td>7,773</td>
<td>1,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>36,045</td>
<td>6,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>3,413</td>
<td>1,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
<td>113,900</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia total</td>
<td>153,358</td>
<td>9,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Eastern Europe</td>
<td>305,450</td>
<td>52,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe total</td>
<td>306,950</td>
<td>52,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>262,910</td>
<td>42,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>18,005</td>
<td>8,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa total</td>
<td>280,915</td>
<td>50,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,190,519</td>
<td>169,789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR’s Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017

4.2.10 Strengthening the strategic use of resettlement

UNHCR noted at the ATCR that, apart from the 4.8 million refugees displaced into neighbouring countries by the civil war in Syria, there are another 6.5 million refugees in protracted situations in 156 countries. Change can only come if there is joint UN, government and civil society action to promote peace building, reconstruction after conflict, increased access to livelihoods in countries of asylum, more resettlement places and alternative pathways for more people.

The strategic use of resettlement to increase protection for those not resettled must be the way forward. UNHCR is working on housing, land and conflict issues in Burma to help create opportunities for refugees to consider returning voluntarily. One possibility which could be explored is allowing people to maintain their nationality and remain where they are under a regional citizenship model similar to that operating in the Economic Community of West African States.

4.3 FEEDBACK ON CONDITIONS IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND ASYLUM

Even though these people are in a safe land, because there is no war there, they have another war…. They have to live, they have to survive, sometimes in impossible ways… They are fighting a war for meaning for life. A war for existence.

— Case worker, Western Australia

During RCOA’s consultations, refugee community members provided feedback on conditions faced by people fleeing persecution. This section summarises feedback gathered during the consultation process and at other consultations, meetings and discussions over the past 12 months.
4.3.1 Countries of origin

General feedback

Several consultation participants expressed the view that people did not understand why people fled danger because of the lack of media coverage of those issues. As one community member put it:

*The media coverage is poor; media does not cover the war in Sudan nor in Africa as much as covering what is happening in the Middle East. You can see more of what is happening in Syria or Iraq but what about these other countries, it is also war, it’s dying, killing, exactly the same thing.*

Afghanistan

Community members from Afghanistan raised several concerns about their safety and the safety of their family and friends still in Afghanistan or in neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Iran. They discussed the deteriorating security, political and economic situation in Afghanistan.

Many people raised concerns about the forced deportations of Afghans from Pakistan to Afghanistan in the wake of fresh clashes between the two countries. Many expressed fear for their unprotected families who do not have the right to legally remain in Pakistan and as a result face the prospects of being forcibly returned to Afghanistan and face further danger.

Many people expressed that the increasing instability and insecurity, due to the re-emergence of ISIS and Taliban strongholds, make it impossible to obtain some of the identity documents the Australian Government requires for the purpose of processing their asylum and citizenship applications in Australia.

Many community members expressed concerns over the deterioration of target killings of Afghan Hazaras. Many referred to the killing of 88 mainly young Hazaras in July 2016 who were peacefully protesting for equal rights under the current unity Government and the right to equal development in the Hazarajat region.

Burma

While the discussions about repatriation continue, many community members expressed concern about the safety for their family and friends still on the Thai-Burma border. Many community members expressed reservations about, or were highly critical, of the peace negotiations taking place in Burma. They argued that no peace agreement had yet been signed and that those involved in the negotiations were not necessarily representative or acting in the interests of the civilian population.

Many people spoke of the lack of trust between refugee populations and the Burmese Government. There was also concern that the increase in foreign aid, tourism and infrastructure development did not necessarily benefit the people, particularly ethnic minorities, and that much of the push into Burma was causing people to lose their land (again). As one Karen man put it, “the military is like a mad dog trying to cleanse this land using abuse”.

The situation for the Rohingya in Rakhine State further deteriorated in 2016. Consultation participants highlighted the extreme risk that Rohingyas in Burma face, meaning that they had no other option but to travel by boat to find protection. Given their stateless status and high level of persecution, Rohingya people were seen as having limited options.

Sri Lanka

Community members shared their concerns that while the war may be over, it is still not safe for Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Reports of persecution of Tamil people in Sri Lanka were raised during consultations with claims of kidnappings, land confiscation, persecution and imprisonment of people forcibly returned to Sri Lanka.
One participant stated that:

*People are still being kidnapped and having their throats slit. People who have been returned are being given hard time. Their land has been confiscated. A Tamil man in the north had his land burnt because he was becoming successful. The authorities are making sure Tamils don’t succeed. People are constantly being questioned about where they are and why. Returned asylum seekers are being persecuted, as are their families. They are being harassed and left with nowhere to go. Access to the north of Sri Lanka is blocked to many organisations because the authorities don’t want foreigners to see what is happening there. I have a colleague who visits Sri Lankan jails and he sees a lot of people returned from Australia.*

**South Sudan**

A number of community members spoke about the deteriorating situation in South Sudan since civil conflict began in 2010. They spoke about how many people were internally displaced and even more people had fled to neighbouring countries like Kenya and Uganda. Community members feared that the conflict in the Nuba Mountains was not being given the attention that it required. Fears of arrests, kidnapping, and other disappearances were on top of ongoing violence. As one man shared:  

*Sudan and Nuba Mountain have been in turmoil since 2011…and [yet] no one from Nuba Mountains has arrived in Australia. None. Not even one. And Darfur as well. The war images are there.*

4.3.2 **Other countries/cultures of origin**

- **Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo**: Anguish over the continuing conflict was expressed, with particular worry about the appalling violence against women and near constant massacres. A number of people expressed concern that there was too little in terms of international advocacy and action to combat the violence.
- **Oromo people**: Concern was expressed about the lack of humanitarian aid available and decreasing options for those in refugee camps.
- **Iran**: Several community members shared their concern that the persecution happening in Iran was “behind closed doors” and therefore not visible to other governments, media and the public.
- **Mali**: One consultation participant shared his concern about countries trying to return people to Mali, and the government of Mali not recognising people as nationals that can be returned.
- **Syria**: There were concerns for people still inside Syria who have not yet been able to escape and calls for them to have access to a safe option. There were also stories of people being kidnapped or disappearing.
- **Venezuela**: One community member shared his experience of leaving Venezuela, highlighting that “the situation in my country had become more extreme, as communists have taken control of the country. After the president of Venezuela died, there was another president who was more extreme communist. He started to kill many people and put them in jail.”

4.3.3 **Countries of asylum**

**General feedback**

There was considerable feedback about the exodus of people from crises in the Middle East and parts of Northern Africa to Europe. Community members shared their fears about the closing borders in many European countries and the disturbing conditions that people seeking protection often faced. As one person put it, “many countries are busily erecting barricades and wires”.

In contrast, many people shared their hope that Germany was providing a form of safe haven for people fleeing crises and conflicts. Community members also spoke about the concern that people from conflicts in Africa were finding it very difficult to flee to Europe, but that options were also reducing in Africa with the possible closure of refugee camps in Kenya and the revocation of legal status for people from a refugee background.
As in years past, community members from a range of backgrounds spoke about general conditions for refugees in countries of asylum, with recurring themes illustrating the lack of safety and durable solutions. Some key themes included:

- lack of access to timely and fair RSD processes in many places
- lack of access to timely solutions
- lack of or uncertain legal status in many countries of asylum, which places people at risk of arbitrary detention, exploitation, corruption and abuse
- lack of physical safety in camps and urban areas
- the precariousness of refugee livelihoods, including the inability in many countries for refugees to legally work, the vulnerability to exploitation and abuse due to the lack of work rights and inadequate sources of alternative income
- health issues and lack of access to needed health services
- lack of access to education for children
- security and safety issues when people try to register with UNHCR or other embassies
- lack of co-ordination between international agencies, prolonging the RSD process
- better support for young people, especially those who are on their own, and
- more accountability for organisations receiving international funding to prevent corruption.

**Indonesia**

Many community members spoke about the situation for thousands of refugees and people seeking asylum in Indonesia. They spoke about the long delays in processing refugee claims, risk of arrest and detention and lack of safety, basic rights (such as access to education, employment and health care) and durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia.

As one person noted:

> There’s no process in Indonesia and it’s around fifteen to twenty thousand people there waiting. What is going to happen to them? We should assist these people. Because in Indonesia, it’s a crime to be [living there as a person seeking asylum] and then they go to jail.

Many participants were adamant that Indonesia was critical to providing protection for refugees in the region. As one person shared:

> While Indonesia is trying to improve its own system of managing asylum seekers and refugees, many remain in detention for years, with few resettlement options. Australia could offer Indonesia support that offers positive reinforcement.

**Iran**

Several Afghan community members shared their experiences from having lived in Iran as refugees. They relayed the poor treatment that they faced, with one Afghan community member saying:

> They treated us like dogs. I cannot forget that pain ever. I was living in Iran for 9 years and I don’t have a good memory to tell you. You catch a bus and people tell you, you are an Afghan, you smell, get out.

Others shared their experiences of being prevented from studying, working, and horrifying incidents of sexual assault and other violence, with one man describing it as hate crimes against Afghans living in Iran.

**Malaysia**

There were several comments about the hopelessness of being ‘stuck’ in Malaysia with no hope of resettlement and the resulting financial/mental health issues. Of additional concern were safety issues and lack of avenues for support.

There was also community comment about the fear of Burmese repatriation by the government without adequate assessment of the conditions facing refugees on return. One person commented:
Some of the Burmese in Malaysia especially the single women and men when they go to apply for the new UNHCR card they are denied. The UNHCR says the government has changed so they can go back to Myanmar. But they don’t have anything back there, they don’t have a house, they don’t have any family back there. If they go back they don’t have anything to survive on for probably 10 years.

**Pakistan**

Feedback from community members about Pakistan focused on the considerable reduction in international support for Afghan refugees living there. There were concerns that the Pakistan Government was both forcibly repatriating Afghan refugees while also not permitting local integration and settlement for Afghans, most of whom have been living in Pakistan for decades or were even born there.

There was also extensive information shared about the deteriorating security situation in Pakistan. As one person put it:

> Pakistan is under a severe security threat and in the past ten days about 112 persons have been killed and hundreds injured in different terrorist activities. After every incident security forces start operation against Afghan refugees.

This targeting of refugees, without any justification, was highlighted by other community members. As one man from Afghanistan with family still in Pakistan relayed:

> The situation is not certain. It is a shaky situation. We are from the Shia community and they specially target us. They think we are not Muslims and just want to kill them.

**Egypt**

There were accounts of people who had fled to Egypt from Sudan almost two decades ago but who had returned to Sudan recently because of security concerns in Egypt. Others remained in Egypt but their lives were precarious and resettlement did not seem like an option for them.

### 4.4 AUSTRALIA’S RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

> Australia has the capacity to be a leader in positive policies and responses.

— NSW service provider

Many people expressed a desire for Australia to play a bigger role in fostering peace and justice in the global context. While it is undeniable that many refugees in our region face extraordinarily difficult circumstances, the picture is not universally bleak. Constructive initiatives of different states in the Asia-Pacific provide positive examples. For example:

- On 31 December 2016, Indonesia introduced through Presidential Decree provisions for asylum seekers and refugees in its migration laws for the first time in history.
- Thailand has passed a Cabinet Resolution to develop an effective screening mechanism to distinguish refugees from economic migrants, and recent commitments made by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha in New York included to end the practice of immigration detention of refugee and asylum seeker children.
- Malaysia has recently initiated a pilot project on work rights for 300 Rohingya refugees with plans to extend this to 56,000 registered Rohingya refugees.
- Pakistan affords many refugees a level of legal protection through Proof of Registration cards.
- India generally does not restrict refugees’ freedom of movement and in 2012 allowed refugees to apply for long term visas which can provide access to tertiary education.
- The Philippines acceded to the Refugee Convention in 1981 and more recently introduced a new status determination procedure for refugees and stateless people.
- In Hong Kong, the government refrains from detention and issues ‘recognisance papers’ to refugees allowing them to live in the community.
- In South Korea, tireless advocacy efforts have resulted in the development of a national refugee law which was enacted 2013, making it the first country in East Asia to take this step.
Australia could play a much more considered and constructive role in supporting initiatives that enhance refugee protection in the Asia-Pacific region. Consultation participants identified a range of strategies other than resettlement which Australia could adopt to address key protection issues in countries of origin and asylum or enhance existing responses. These included aid initiatives, international diplomacy and regional cooperation.

4.4.1 Aid initiatives

Australia’s total overseas development aid (ODA) budget for 2017-18 is $3.9 billion. This is a reduction of $224 million from 2015-16 (which saw the most severe round of cuts, amounting to $3.7 billion over three years). This will see Australia’s ODA contribution fall from 0.25% of the Gross National Income (GNI) to just 0.23%, the lowest level of aid that Australia has ever given as a share of national income.

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has pointed out that this severely undermines Australia’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of this agreement, Australia and 193 other members of the United Nations committed to providing 0.7% of GNI in ODA to developing countries to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality by 2030.

Consultation participants were concerned about the negative effect of the winding back of aid both to countries of origin and asylum. A practical and effective way to support a more prosperous, peaceful and stable world is by strengthening and using Australia’s ODA program to address the root causes of displacement, as well as to support initiatives that promote the rights and protection of people seeking asylum.

As in previous years, participants suggested that Australia’s aid program should focus on human security addressing the root causes of displacement. There were suggestions that aid funding to organisations (including grassroots civil society organisations) working with displaced populations and local host communities in key countries of asylum, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, would help Australia play a leading role in addressing the causes of major displacement in both the region and worldwide.

Many people recommended that resources be directed to help protect refugees in countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Australian core contributions to UNHCR decreased from $21 million in 2014-15 to $19.95 million in the 2015-16 budget. It is unclear how the Australian Government’s commitment of $130 million over three years (made at the New York Summits) will be allocated and whether UNHCR will receive any of those funds. There were many calls for increased support for UNHCR, particularly given the gap in their funding needs worldwide and the important work that they did in assessing asylum claims, processing resettlement applications, and providing emergency assistance.

4.4.2 International diplomacy

Participants reaffirmed strongly that Australia was well-placed to be a leader both in the region and in the world. As one participant in NSW reflected:

_Australia has the capacity to be a leader in positive policies and responses. I am really sad that we are leading in a terrible direction at this point in time, promoting our protection of our borders and our deterrent strategies without acknowledging any of the pain that causes for people. You know it is appalling to think we are leading a world and destroying lives of women and children and men on Manus Island and Nauru and that is our flagship policy. I find that really distressing and I would like to see that we actually had positive responses, that kind of positive things that we did with Vietnamese boat people, that we stopped the boats coming by actually providing other pathways for people to come here safely and comprehensively in a bipartisan way. That is the kind of international lead that I would like to see Australia taking._

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Many people felt that the current bipartisan support for offshore processing and “stopping the boats” was a stain on Australia’s reputation, and did not stop people from dying. As a participant in Western Australia noted:

People don’t stop dying because they are not dying in our waters. We need to look at larger global picture, but we also need to look at what policy of deterrence does in terms of the way our own search and rescue respond. I have sat in Coroner’s Court and representatives from Australian Maritime search and rescue teams speak in the most disparaging terms about the people whose lives were in their hands who they actively failed to rescue. Deterrence kills, we need to completely reframe our way of thinking and think globally.

Many others agreed with this concern, sharing that people are still dying, just in other places. Several consultation participants believed that Australia’s foreign policy could be more strategic in relation to refugee needs rather than only a crisis response. Many called for an overarching strategy that took into account the objectives of both the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (see Section 4.4.3).

Consultation participants encouraged the Australian Government to make better use of diplomatic channels to address the root causes of conflicts and forced migration. Another suggestion was to condition the distribution of foreign aid on improvements in human rights in countries receiving aid. In particular, one suggested that foreign aid should be given to the Burmese Government only if it adhered to human rights principles, overseen by international NGOs. Other participants said Australia should do more to address the impact of free trade and globalisation as a cause of conflict in African countries.

### 4.4.3 Regional cooperation

Discussion about regional cooperation mirrored that of previous years. The difference, however, was the rare alignment of key interests in the region that meant that there is a possibility of large-scale protection needs being met if action is taken by governments like Australia.

In particular, in Southeast Asia there are factors leading to the possibility of large-scale voluntary repatriation for non-Rohingya refugees from Burma (constituting about 64% of the entire refugee population in the region).

As well, there are pilots and programs in other countries that could improve the living conditions and protection needs of thousands of refugees in the region. These include Malaysia’s pilot project on work rights for 300 Rohingya refugees, with plans to extend this to the 56,000 registered Rohingya refugees. There is also Indonesia’s new Presidential Decree (Perpres) on Refugees, giving recognition to the status of refugees and people seeking asylum and detailing provisions for the management of refugee needs, including search and rescue operations and alternatives to detention.21

Many participants felt that the money spent on detention centres and deterrence could be better spent supporting small programs in the region providing basic needs to refugees, like education for children, food and accommodation.

RCOA’s established position is that the Australian Government should develop an integrated cross-portfolio approach in our response to issues of forced displacement, with a view to contribute to constructive solutions. That is, Australia has a number of positive levers of influence it could use to a much greater effect if an integrated cross-portfolio approach was taken. These levers include:

- **Refugee resettlement:** Over the past 40 years, Australia has done much to support nations in the region through its resettlement program. In the five years to June 2016, Australia issued resettlement visas to 17,067 refugees from Asia, most of them relocating from Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal, Pakistan and India. This gives Australia a positive platform on which to engage these states in constructive dialogue about how to improve the protection of refugees who haven’t been resettled. Australia can also bring other resettlement states, particularly the United States and Canada, into these discussions.

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• **Overseas aid:** Despite the massive cuts in the past few years to its overseas aid program, Australia is still a significant funder of refugee protection strategies in the region, primarily through UNHCR and IOM. The Australian Government could choose to use its aid program more strategically to support new regional and local initiatives (government, NGO, UNHCR and IOM) which enhance refugee protection.

• **Diplomatic action:** Working for improvements in human rights conditions in countries of origin — seeking to address issues of displacement at their source — is critical to a comprehensive and effective regional strategy. While not wishing to overstate what can be achieved, Australia still retains sufficient international credibility to play a constructive role, if it is prepared to move beyond a seemingly singular obsession with preventing people movement and shift focus to the persecution and abuses which prompt refugees to move.

• **Sharing expertise:** NGOs and government agencies in Australia have considerable expertise, built up over several decades, on many issues of refugee status determination, protection, settlement and engagement with refugee communities. This expertise not only gives Australia significant credibility in regional discussions but could be shared as part of strategies to support the development of new protection initiatives.

4.5 **POSSIBLE PRIORITIES FOR AUSTRALIA’S RESettlement PROGRAM**

[We could] do resettlement in a smarter way and target our resettlement places in a smarter way. I think the strategic thinking is missing at the moment. I think that's an area where the government has been challenged a little bit less and looked upon as part of the program that we don't need to worry about. In a matter of fact there must be more work done to make it more effective.

— Community member, NSW

4.5.1 **Feedback from consultation participants**

There was considerable feedback about Australia’s need to act swiftly to place urgent pressure on the government of Burma (Myanmar) to stop the violence against the Rohingya people in Rakhine state. There were also many calls for the Australian Government to increase humanitarian assistance and resettlement places to those that have fled the conflict especially in Rakhine State and in Bangladesh. Australia has resettled just 37 Rohingya people since 2013, and should urgently increase the number of Rohingya who are resettled as refugees. Given the urgency of the situation and the unwillingness of the Burmese Government to address the atrocities, these places should be in addition to the 2017-18 quota of 16,750 places.

There was also considerable feedback about the need to resettle people displaced from South Sudan. There was concern that the deteriorating conditions in South Sudan and resulting flight was not a priority in resettlement consideration for Australia or other resettlement countries. The reduction in resettlement places available to the USA — many of which would provide safety for people from conflicts in Africa — increased concern that people suffering as a result of turmoil in South Sudan would not find protection via resettlement. It was suggested that Australia should play a role in providing resettlement places for people from South Sudan, many of which are young children, and that more places for people from Africa should be quarantined in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

4.5.2 **Strategic use of resettlement and multi-year planning**

With the reduction in the global number of places available for resettlement as a result of the U.S. President’s efforts to suspend their refugee resettlement program, there is an even more urgent need for the strategic use of resettlement. The strategic use of resettlement aims to promote broader refugee protection by encouraging the countries of asylum which benefit most from resettlement (such as Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia) to improve the protection of refugees who will not be resettled by providing them some form of legal status, the right to work and freedom from detention.

Australia also has an opportunity for its Refugee and Humanitarian Program to be more flexible and responsive to emerging and escalating conflicts. A multi-year planning approach to the Refugee and
Humanitarian Program could provide the government with both the flexibility to respond to crises as well as the security of a defined and informed Program.

4.5.3 Principles for Australia’s response

In our annual submission over the past several years, RCOA has outlined principles for the Australian Government’s response, based on feedback from community consultations. Responding to community views that the scale of the Syrian crisis and the other ongoing crises in the world all require an additional response, we offer seven principles relevant for the planning of the 2017-18 Refugee and Humanitarian Program:

1. **The need for resettlement to be made widely available as a durable solution** — by expanding, not reducing, the Australian refugee resettlement program and advocating for other nations to follow suit.

2. **A focus on resettling the most vulnerable** — particularly those with disabilities, at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, unaccompanied minors, those at risk of detention, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) refugees at risk in countries of asylum and refugees isolated from community support (such as refugees well outside their region of origin).

3. **An emphasis on family unity** — taking into account the issues raised in Family reunion 5.6 of this submission.

4. **The strategic use of resettlement to promote broader refugee protection** — encouraging the countries of asylum which benefit most from resettlement (such as Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia) to improve the protection of refugees who will not be resettled, by providing them some form of legal status, the right to work and freedom from detention.

5. **The need to balance resettlement needs in different regions** — taking particular note of the extent of resettlement needs in the Africa region, while also responding to pressing needs in Asia and the Middle East.

6. **An additional response to protection needs in large-scale emergency situations** — developing a contingency quota over and above the annual refugee intake to respond to crisis situations such as the current one in countries neighbouring Syria.

7. **A coherent overarching government strategy for refugee protection** — articulating how the Australian Government’s commitment to the protection of refugees is put into action in its refugee resettlement strategy, its official aid and development program, its involvement in multilateral forums and its diplomatic action on human rights in refugees’ countries of origin and asylum.

4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: A strategic framework for resettlement**

The Australian Government should develop, publish and implement a framework for Australia’s refugee resettlement program based on:

a) **priority resettlement to the most vulnerable refugees**, including women at risk, children at risk, culturally isolated groups of refugees (e.g. small groups of African refugees in South and South-East Asia), LGBTI refugees and other minorities at risk

b) **the promotion of family unity**

c) **the strategic use of resettlement, and**

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d) the consideration of global resettlement needs in the development of regional allocations.

**Recommendation 2: Increasing resettlement from Africa**

In view of pressing needs across the African continent, the Australian Government should ensure that the 2017-18 regional target for resettlement from Africa be set at no lower than 25% of the offshore program.

**Recommendation 3: Urgently addressing the plight of the Rohingya**

The Australian Government should urgently increase the number of places available to Rohingya refugees, as a first step. It should also work with other resettlement states and the Governments of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand to develop a regional strategy for facilitating resettlement and brokering other durable solutions for Rohingya refugees, including through reinstating resettlement from Bangladesh.

**Recommendation 4: Fund protection efforts overseas and in our region**

The Australian Government should:

a) in light of the crucial role of aid in assisting forcibly displaced people, restore Australia’s overseas aid program to its former level and develop a plan to increase overseas aid to 0.7% of Gross National Income

b) work with diaspora communities in Australia and people living in refugee communities overseas to identify urgent protection needs in countries of origin and asylum and develop and implement strategies to respond to these needs, and

c) provide additional funding to UNHCR, given the increasing numbers of displaced people worldwide and UNHCR’s critical role in coordinating humanitarian responses to displacement.

**Recommendation 5: Develop a whole-of-government approach to promoting protection**

The Australian Government should develop a cross-portfolio approach to promoting the protection of refugees and working with other states to explore options to promote:

a) peace in countries of origin, particularly states from which the number of refugees and asylum seekers is increasing (e.g. Pakistan, Burma)

b) reconciliation processes in countries where there is movement towards peace and possibilities for the eventual safe voluntary return of refugees (e.g. Burma, Sri Lanka)

c) access to some form of legal status, alternatives to detention, work rights, education and health for refugees in countries of asylum, particularly in South East Asia, and

d) cooperation between resettlement states which even more actively engages with host states on other forms of durable solutions.

**Recommendation 6: Convene a forum to advance integrated response to displacement**

The Australian Government should convene a forum with NGOs, peak bodies, intergovernmental bodies and other relevant stakeholders to advance the development of this integrated response to displacement, including consideration of the roles of aid, diplomacy, capacity-building and resettlement.

**Recommendation 7: Provide international leadership on displacement**

The Australian Government should, as part of its bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, provide positive leadership in international action to:
a) address the drivers of forced displacement and respond to protection needs in countries of asylum, with a particular focus on refugees living in protracted situations and/or facing serious risks to their lives and freedom; and

b) develop a comprehensive response to the growing Syrian refugee crisis.

**Recommendation 8: Revive the Regional Cooperation Framework**

The Australian Government should, in its capacity as co-chair of the Bali Process, revive efforts to operationalise the Regional Cooperation Framework agreed to by Bali Process members in March 2011.

**Recommendation 9: Establish a contingency quota for emergency responses**

The Australian Government should establish an Emergency Response contingency quota over and above the annual Refugee and Humanitarian Program intake to 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.
5 AUSTRALIA’S REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE 2015-16 PROGRAM

Let’s have a proactive rather than reactive program.

— Service provider in NSW

The year 2015-16 saw an overall increase in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program with an extra 3,790 visas granted to people as part of the Government’s commitment to resettle an additional 12,000 refugees from the crises in Syria and Iraq. This brought the total of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 17,555 places. 8,210 people of the 12,000 places are expected to arrive in the 2016-17 financial year. At least 750 fewer people received an Onshore Permanent Protection Visa (PPV) than in previous years.

Table 8: Permanent Refugee and Humanitarian visa grants by subclass, 2008-2009 to 2015-2016

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<td>Refugee (visa subclass 200)</td>
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<td>10,238</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>4,849</td>
<td>6,730</td>
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<td>In-country Special Humanitarian (201)</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>133</td>
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<td>Emergency Rescue (203)</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Woman at Risk (204)</td>
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<td>1,277</td>
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<td>12,012</td>
<td>6,501</td>
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<td>714</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>4,515</td>
<td>5,007</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 202 visas granted by ministerial intervention</td>
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<td>Total Offshore Special Humanitarian</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>4,515</td>
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<td>11,009</td>
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<td>Permanent Onshore Protection visas</td>
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<td>Onshore Permanent Protection (866)</td>
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<td>13,768</td>
<td>13,911</td>
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5.2 SIZE OF THE PROGRAM

5.2.1 Capacity for resettlement

The overwhelming feedback from community members, service providers and former refugees was that Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program should be significantly increased beyond the 18,750 places planned for 2018-19. While Australia’s resettlement program may be ranked third in the world, resettlement is only a small contribution to refugee protection. As a service provider in Sydney noted:

When you are talking about 23 million refugees internationally and 107,000 that got settled in 2015, this is just the smallest, smallest group. It is a drop in the ocean.

With the additional intake of refugees from Iraq and Syria, 2015-16 saw an increase in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, from 11,009 offshore resettlement places in 2014-15 to 15,552 offshore places in 2015-16. Participants across the country welcomed this modest increase, while highlighting

23 Note that not all visa grants are recorded: “The Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance Program was fully delivered in 2015–16, with 17,555 visas granted. This included 15,552 visas under the offshore component and 2003 visas under the onshore component. The offshore component of the program includes 3790 visas granted as part of the Government’s commitment to deliver 12,000 additional humanitarian program places for people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Within the offshore component 6730 visas were granted under the refugee category and 5032 were granted under the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). In 2015–16 a total of 1277 Woman at Risk visas were granted. This included visas granted under the annual 2015–16 Humanitarian Program, and those granted towards the additional 12,000 places for Syrian and Iraqi refugees as part of the Syrian and Iraqi Humanitarian Crisis Measure.” From this, 2,513 visas from the Offshore component are unaccounted for.
that there is still significant capacity to expand the program beyond the 18,750 quota set for 2018-19.

In fact, participants noted that the quota for 2016-17 was already on track to resettle more people than the planned limit for 2018-19, as the 8,210 additional places from the Syrian and Iraqi program were filled this financial year, while 11,000 are planned for the regular offshore component. This means that 2016-17 will see a quota of almost 22,000 places, which will then drop again to 16,250 places in 2017-18.

*Figure 1: Refugee and Humanitarian Program with additional Syrian and Iraqi intake, 2012-13 to 2018-19*

5.2.2 Service planning

Participants highlighted that, if the Government recognises Australia’s capacity to resettle 22,000 people in one year, this should then become the minimum standard for the following years. Indeed, many service providers highlighted that fluctuating numbers significantly disrupts service delivery. Service providers observed that it also creates extra costs for organisations, as they have to recruit and retrain new staff and lose experienced staff. As one service provider in NSW noted:

*Over the past five years or so we have seen the size of the program have gone up and down so much and all of those scaling up and down are costly. It’s very costly for settlement services to run businesses that way and I can see it happening again with this 12,000. All of that expertise being built into the settlement programs will be lost. I think it is actually costly to keep on doing this and if we are going to increase it, then we should keep it increased. It’s one thing to say it will cost us more to increase the program, it will also cost you to cut it, it is certainly costly if it keeps fluctuating and not being on a consistent trajectory.*

Poor communication and planning by the Australian Government means that settlement services cannot plan properly for the year ahead if they do not know how many new arrivals they will receive, and when they will arrive. This means that organisations have to hire and train staff in expectation of new arrivals, without commitments and timelines for when new communities will arrive. As one service provider in Sydney highlighted:
The thing is there’s a lack of communication between the services and the government. They know that this is where everybody comes, so why are they not providing us with enough resources? Over the past 12 months we’ve had the enormous challenge of getting information from Immigration about the intake that’s coming in, and they just don’t want to tell us anything. Why is it a hidden agenda? We are here to serve these people, we are here to help them. So why aren’t they having a partnership with us as a community and as health providers, as NGO services, for us to work together to provide these services.

Service providers and other participants highlighted the need to ensure that services can plan for the year ahead. Service providers called for the intake of new arrivals to be spread evenly across the year, rather than having a large number of family groups arrive in the same week. As one service provider highlighted:

*For us, one of the major issues is the unevenness of the flow of how people come in. At times it’s very, very quiet, at other times, it can be very busy.*

Participants expressed significant concern about the lack of communication by the Department of Immigration regarding planning for the resettlement quota. For example, in relation to the increased Syrian and Iraqi quota, service providers and community members expected a significant increase in a short amount of time. However, the slow speed of resettlement meant many scaled up only to wait. As one local council highlighted:

*There was the announcement of the increase of intake, and then everybody was getting prepared, and rushing to get prepared… I’ve spoken to other agencies who had people ready, they had to let them go because the people weren’t coming in. And then they came in in a massive flood and now people are scrambling, services are scrambling to accommodate these individuals, who, yeah they’re traumatized and the staff as well they’re exhausted. I think it’s all those things coming together.*

Settlement services across Australia highlighted that they have significant capacity to respond to an increased program, provided it is well managed, planned, coordinated and fairly distributed. As one service provider in Victoria highlighted:

*So everyone so far can probably say that it has been manageable to actually have that almost doubling of what we would normally get across a year, so to me we’ve had no problem finding housing, schooling has been no issue, Centrelink is not having any issue. There are other things that come from that but it depends a bit on how big a number. One thing that I think was interesting for us is actually getting Iraqis, as a really new community, to actually get them established and embedded is the key to success, because we want them to stay. But if you don’t have that core group then others won’t stay. In terms of services, there’s always pressure on health services anyway, and maybe we need another Refugee Health Nurse if we’re going to have higher numbers because you’ve still got the same amount of staff dealing with twice the number. The services could be better but certainly the community in our case can certainly manage.*

### 5.3 COMPOSITION OF THE PROGRAM

#### 5.3.1 Focus on Special Humanitarian Program

Participants expressed concerns that certain countries and backgrounds were underrepresented, and that there was too much focus on resettling those with community links in Australia.

While participants welcomed the increase to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program in light of the ongoing conflict in Iraq and Syria, many also felt that less attention was being paid to other protracted situations around the world, especially in Africa. As one community member from South Sudan noted:
There is no fairness in Australia’s policies in taking refugees. It is not fair when Africa is getting zero and Syria has got 12,000 and they are facing the same exact war. The Prime Minister can come out and give 12,000 visas to Syria when the whole number is 13,000 a year. At the same time, what I can see that this processing of these applications takes long time, it can take up till decades, even some grow up in refugee camps and once they come here they have to be reintegrated in the community. For us it takes longer to get visas than the refugees from Syria and Iraq, and our visa options are very limited. The 202 visa is no longer working; other visas are also not given quickly (orphans) can wait for two, three, four or five years. For an orphan who has lost their mothers and fathers take up to five years to be resettled.

A similar view was expressed by a service provider in regional Victoria:

The media have focused heavily on Syrians and have been welcoming. But we still have other refugees from other backgrounds who are coming. We say to people, there are still refugees coming. There are Sudanese, Congolese and Afghani. But they are forgotten, their trauma is forgotten and I think that is a little bit sad. It is not that the Syrians do not deserve attention, but I just like to remind people that this [emphasis on Syrians] is a thing purely created by the media.

Participants reflected on the need to resettle those who are most vulnerable, as identified by referral from UNHCR. Many expressed concern with the increased focus on selecting refugees for resettlement through community proposals (such as through the SHP), rather than through referral through UNHCR.

While an increase in the SHP is welcome, especially given the significant backlog in family reunion application, there is considerable concern that refugees are being chosen based on their community links to Australia rather than their need. This is reflected in comments by a service provider in Western Australia:

What we are seeing is a very strong push by the Australian government for the SHP or the sponsored 202 visa category. And the Australian government made it very clear that proportion, which for us is 40%, is actually going to increase even more. And what that does is displaces the other visa type categories which we would argue are a higher priority in terms of need. So it’s a worrying trend… The Australian government finds it much cheaper to support that increasing proportion because they have to pay less to both airfares and to service providers. So there’s actually a ripple effect of the increasing number of 202 sponsored category clients. And it’s a very, very strong push and delivered poorly I think from what we’ve seen. And that to me is a real worry.

Participants in the consultations highlighted their concern that with the increased number of SHP visa arrivals, a larger number of people are not accessing settlement support. Instead, they are relying on the support of their proposers, many of whom are still going through the settlement process themselves. As a service provider in NSW highlighted:

We see that already with the 202 with the family reunion visas and you know when you fill in the application proposing and you tick all the boxes you are going this and the other but the reality is, the vast majority [does not] have the capacity to actually provide this support, so eventually it often comes back to the service providers to fulfill the task, to provide accommodation, and do all the linking and so forth. So whilst the expectation is there, the reality is quite different. People who have only been in the country a couple of years themselves and who are still struggling on minimum wage or not on a wage, you know it is very difficult to provide all of that support.

This is further exemplified in worrying comments by a service provider:

Just to give you an example … We’ve had a 13 year old boy who has been approved to be a 202 sponsor. We’ve had an 87 year old who has a disability … who cannot provide support to their principal applicant, who has also been approved to be a sponsor. They’re really pushing the 202 no matter what. Whether they are capable or not capable. And the problem is that inevitably falls back to the provider to claim what they can, but knowing that the department basically is able to hide behind a bad composition, to be honest with you. The composition percentages are changing but not balanced and appropriate, to be honest.
5.3.2 Impact on regional and rural areas

Further, an increased SHP means that new arrivals are moving into areas where their family and community reside, as opposed to Refugee Visa arrivals being able to move to regional and other areas. This has resulted in some local areas, such as Fairfield in NSW, receiving a significantly disproportionate number of new arrivals. As one service provider in Fairfield noted:

> There’s a long history of Fairfield being a primary settlement area, and so it’s not as though this has just been for a year or two, or a short period where staff has got time to grieve when it settles down. It just doesn’t settle down. It’s just additional pressure heaped on top of pressure. And it’s almost as though government, and probably the staff to an extent are so accustomed to it that people don’t speak out and go, like, we really do require additional resources. Just because people have managed up to this point, just barely managed, doesn’t mean that that should be the new level of expectation.

In contrast, regional areas are no longer receiving a steady stream of primary arrivals, and as such have had to scale down their staff. As one regional service provider highlighted:

> Why not settle them in areas like Macarthur, like Campbelltown? It always goes up to Liverpool, and then after Liverpool as if we don’t exist? While the services are available, whether it’s organisations like ours, or Centrelink or Housing. We’re all ready, but there’s nothing happening, so why is there all the pressure on areas like Fairfield?

While more must be done to encourage and develop regional settlement, the pressure on metropolitan areas like Fairfield is partly due to the higher number of arrivals through community proposers who have mostly settled in metropolitan areas over the last few years.

5.3.3 Vulnerability as key criterion

Further, participants noted that it seems that many people on refugee visas are not being referred by UNHCR but instead are being selected because they have been proposed by a family or community member in Australia. It has been RCOA’s position that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, and especially the Refugee Visa category, should be used to resettle those who are most vulnerable, as identified through UNHCR, while additional places should be made to support family reunion.

Some consultation participants expressed concern that the Government was preferring refugees based on their religion, rather than their need for protection. While a person’s religion is often a reason for their flight, many participants felt that people should not be resettled because they are from a certain religion, but instead based on their vulnerability. Many were concerned that there had been preferential treatment of Christian refugees from the Middle East over other persecuted groups. This concern has some basis in the resettlement statistics that show almost two-thirds of new arrivals between 1 July 2015 and 1 January 2017 have been from Christian faiths.
Participants also highlighted the contradiction of resettling an additional 12,000 refugees, while those who sought asylum by boat have remained in limbo for years in Australia and in offshore detention centres. As one former refugee from Iran highlighted:

*I see one of the questions is about 12,000 refugees. At the moment there are 30,000 asylum seekers that are in limbo. How can Australia talk about another 12,000. For that 30,000, after four years they don’t have any plans for them. These people don’t know what is happening for the future, only thinking of the news that is coming for tomorrow and the next day as well. So that waiting is the worst. So how can they bring another 12,000? ... It’s like I have a kid, I forget about them and go to my neighbour’s house and start helping their kids.*

These participants urged Australia to grant permanent protection to those found to be refugees in Australia, as well as to resettle those who have been detained on Nauru and Manus Island.

5.4 CHILDREN AT RISK

5.4.1 Needs of children

The displacement of children and youth is at an all-time high. More than 51% of the 21.3 million refugees are under the age of 18, up from 41% in 2014. In 2015, only 839 referrals were submitted globally in the Children and Adolescents at Risk category (equating to 3,171 children and adolescents). However, only 613 children and adolescence departed (0.7%).

Refugee children and youth face far greater risks during their displacement. They often do not have the same legal rights as adults and may be seeking refuge because of sexual or physical violence perpetrated by parents, carers or local authorities. They have often missed out on education and may struggle to self-advocate or to navigate the process of seeking refuge and applying for resettlement. Resettling children at risk is one way to address the precarious situation many young people find themselves in, especially for those who are particularly vulnerable. For example, one service provider in WA highlighted the desperate situation faced by many children in the Horn of Arica:

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There are a lot of unaccompanied children currently living in Khartoum in Sudan. And there’s a lot of reports about South Sudan as well… Eritrea at the moment is extremely difficult. And I think the fact that there’s many children who are fleeing there and living as lone children in Khartoum. There’s a lot of organ trafficking going on, kidnaping, transferring to Libya. I had a client a few weeks ago who told me that a kid that I made an application for has been kidnapped and being held for ransom in Libya. And from being kidnapped from the street in Khartoum. No matter what you can do in the humanitarian program at the moment, there’s no identification of those vulnerable children to increase the speed of processing for things like lone children. We know that there are no women at risk visas they’re all being reserved for UNHCR referrals. So even though that’s a category within the humanitarian program, it’s not actually being used, it’s being saved. Even then when they get to the point of resettlement, they are being refused. With no reasons as to the reason why when they’ve been referred for resettlement. There’s a lack of clarity in the visa categories available at the moment as well.

5.4.2 UNHCR resettlement category

Participants recommended that Australia should consider specific pathways to support Children at Risk. While children and youth are often resettled as part of their family unit, UNHCR also has a specific resettlement category for children and adolescents who may be particularly vulnerable. UNHCR define Children and Adolescents at Risk as:

- under 18
- may or may not be an unaccompanied or separated child, and
- have compelling protection needs which are not addressed in the country of asylum and
- resettlement has been determined to be the most appropriate solution having regard to the child’s best interests.\(^{26}\)

The Children and Adolescents at Risk resettlement recognises that many children face significant risk, with or without their families. To be proposed for settlement, a Best Interests Determination (BID) must identify resettlement as the most appropriate solution for the person. For those who are found to be in need of resettlement following a BID, UNHCR will propose resettlement to a State that has support systems available to resettle the person. Currently, the US and UK have the most established resettlement programs for Children and Adolescents at Risk.

5.4.3 Building on existing programs for children

In April 2016, the UK Government committed to settle up to 3,000 refugee children from the Middle East and North Africa over four years. The scheme will include unaccompanied children, as well as other children at risk with their families, as defined by UNHCR.\(^{27}\) In the US, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program provides resettlement and support to unaccompanied minors.\(^{28}\) For refugee minors, the State Department identifies children overseas who are eligible for resettlement in the US, but do not have a parent or a relative available and committed to providing for their long-term care.

Australia has developed a national approach to supporting unaccompanied minors, with services provided through the NGO sector in five of Australia’s eight states and territories.\(^{29}\) This program was established in 2014, following the evaluation of the Refugee Youth Support Pilot in 2013.

Australia’s Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor (UHM) program supports the care, guardianship and supervision of unaccompanied minors. It is funded by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and delivered by civil society organisations. In some jurisdictions, (state) government child protection agencies play a role, providing services alongside civil society organisations.

The UHM program provides housing and support for unaccompanied minors who have arrived, for the most part, through Australia’s onshore refugee program. While models of support/service delivery vary across the states, all programs provide housing (either independently or in supported

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accommodation, including foster care models) and support young people’s participation to participate in education and community/recreational activities. Most models apply a strengths-based approach and provide individualised case management support.

The UHM Program is delivered in the context of a national service system for humanitarian entrants (‘settlement services’), funded by the Australian government and delivered through the NGO sector. These include a range of youth-specific services, those that support young people’s economic and social participation in Australian society, support for intensive case management to address more complex needs and targeted social cohesion programs.

In recent years, Australia has resettled unaccompanied minors in a limited capacity, primarily through a pilot operating in Indonesia in 2013, and more recently from the Syrian conflict.

Given these factors, the case for Australia to increase its resettlement capacity for children and adolescents at risk, including unaccompanied minors, is strong. Australia has existing systems in place to receive and support children and adolescents at risk, including unaccompanied minors.

5.5 COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

5.5.1 Development of the Program

The use of private sponsorship has received significant interest in Australia and internationally, as the demand for community involvement in refugee resettlement continues. The Australian Government has committed in the New York Declaration to consider the expansion of private sponsorship programs.30

To this end, participants welcomed the announcement that the Community Proposal Pilot (CPP) will become a permanent program known as the Community Support Program (CSP), and will be expanded to 1000 places annually. However, as in previous years, participants highlighted significant concerns with the current model of the program, including its placement within the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, the costs of the program and the restrictions on accessing settlement support.

These concerns have been raised by RCOA in previous years, as well as in the 2015 consultation on the CSP.31 It is unfortunate that the findings or outcomes from the CSP consultation in 2015 have never been released.

5.5.2 Inclusion within the Refugee and Humanitarian Program quota

One of the strongest criticisms of the CPP is that in previous years the places are within the existing Refugee and Humanitarian Program quota. We therefore are disappointed that the recent Budget announcement confirmed that this would remain the case with the CSP.

In our consultations, many participants felt that the inclusion within the quota essentially took the responsibility for resettlement away from the Government, rather than being a program which complements the Government’s responsibility. As one organisation in Sydney highlighted:

> The 500 places offered as CPP for family reunion comes from the humanitarian program. So it’s a way that the government has been able to save money on a program that it already promised to pay for and hasn’t actually added any numbers to the overall size of the humanitarian program. That (adding numbers to humanitarian program) was actually why the organisations around the table first proposed to introduce a pilot, so it’s quite extraordinary that it now is eating into another program.

A similar criticism was expressed by an organisation in Western Australia:

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One of the biggest issues with the community pilot project is it’s still within the current humanitarian allocation. Effectively what it appears to be is the government shirking their responsibilities by putting it on community organisations to do all the settlement services and all the settlement responsibility. And that’s been taken on by groups who don’t fully understand what it is. At least if it moved outside the program, it would have a little bit more authenticity to it.

Participants referred to the Canadian private sponsorship program, which upheld the principle of ‘additionality’, in which community sponsorship compliments the Government’s own commitment and is in addition to the Government set limits. As one participant highlighted:

*In Canada, the… data shows those who have community support settle much better. So if there was some data that could show this is the case for Australia then it would be a way to argue for the increase in the numbers of this program.*

Likewise, another person shared their own research into the success of private sponsorship in Canada:

*Last year I was on a Churchill fellowship visiting other councils in Canada, US and Europe. The private sponsorship program that they have in Canada, which I think Australia has modeled this project on, is one of their most successful initiatives over there. Whilst I was there in Toronto, the mayor of Toronto and four of his mates had gathered together and sponsored a family. There’s a real focus on community involvement in settlement through this private sponsorship program… The fact that they’ve been able to do it on a large scale and I don’t see why that wouldn’t be possible here.*

### 5.5.3 Example of Canada

Participants recommend that the CPP be placed outside of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, with the CSP being complementary to the Australian Government’s resettlement commitment. This has occurred in Canada, where in 2017, the Government plans to resettle 16,000 privately sponsored refugees in addition to the Government’s commitment to resettle 9,000 refugees and protect another 15,000 people found to be refugees in Canada and their families. Participants called for the Australian Government to follow the example of Canada and separate the CSP from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, with the potential to uncap or significantly increase the number of applications under the CSP.

Indeed, private sponsorship has significant benefits for both newly arrived refugees and the wider Australian community. Professor Susan Kneebone from Melbourne University and Professor Audrey Macklin from the University of Toronto have found that “it is recognised that private sponsorship not only confers benefits on refugees, but also benefits the sponsors and the nation in tangible and intangible ways.”

Private sponsors have significant social capital, which they can use to support new arrivals to successfully settle, including providing support to find employment, practice English and develop social networks. Private sponsorship also strengthens community participation in active citizenship and nation building, creating a positive sense of involvement in supporting new arrivals. Research in Canada shows that privately-sponsored refugees can become self-sufficient more quickly than government-sponsored refugees, due in part to the increased social capital and network support provided by private sponsors.

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5.5.4 Costs

The inclusion of the CSP/CPP within the humanitarian program also creates significant problems in relation to the costs of the program. Many participants highlighted the exorbitant costs associated with the program. The total cost of sponsoring a family of four is $38,164, with the proposer also being required to pay for “medical checks for people being processed; airfares to Australia; initial accommodation; and household goods, food and utilities.” This can bring up the costs to well over $50,000. The high cost of the program received significant criticism from participants. For example, a refugee from Africa said:

We don’t have money to apply through CPP. No one here can afford to apply; only business people who have been here for a long time not us. Not any Africans can apply.

Others also expressed concern with the lack of refunds for people who have gone through the process only to have their visa applications rejected in the final stages. As the funds provided for the program are non-refundable, many have lost thousands of dollars only to be rejected. As one organisation highlighted:

I’m aware of one community proposal [which was] refused at the end on the humanitarian claim. What they didn’t realise is that if they put this money up, they still had to meet the requirements of the humanitarian program. So this is obviously people who are already settled here, they speak English, they understand the situation but it’s still a very complex process that they effectively had their money taken away from them and they still got refused with the visa…. … How on earth ethically and morally, is this community pilot proposal allowed to take the money away and when they’re refused, there’s no money back.

Those consulted felt that, if the program was in addition to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, the costs could be justified. Others pointed out the difference between how Australia and Canada account for the costs of the program. In Australia, the money raised by sponsors is paid to the Department for the costs of visas and other services, and to the Approved Processing Organisation for administrative and resettlement support. Refugees resettled in Australia have immediate access to social security through Centrelink.

In Canada, neither sponsors nor refugees pay for visas or settlement services. Rather, the money raised by sponsors goes to the resettled refugees as income support for the first year, after which they are eligible for public income support (if needed). While the costs may be reasonably comparable, the difference between paying large upfront fees and providing money directly to the sponsored family makes a significant difference conceptually, and gives sponsors greater involvement in the settlement process.

5.5.5 Exploitation of desperation

Another concern regarding the CSP/CPP raised by participants was that the program has become a way to exploit the desperation of people to be reunited with their families. Because of the significant issues associated with family reunion (see section 5.6), family members are desperate to find any way to get their family to safety and bring them to Australia. Many felt that this desperation was being exploited by the Australian Government, as one organisation in Sydney highlighted:

Also, it has been prioritising people ahead of others in that program, because they are fast-tracking them, it means that they are going for cases that are not complex; not medical cases or other complex cases, so those perhaps less in need of protection are now being fast-tracked over those who are in greater need of protection which is completely counter-productive to what this program should be about.

Feedback received from participants suggest that the CPP is being seen and used as a more expensive version of the SHP, rather than an attempt to increase the involvement of the community.

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37 “There is a two stage Visa Application Charge (VAC) payable by the organisation or individual which has put forward the applicant. The first VAC is $2680 per application. The second VAC is $16 444 for the primary applicant, and $2680 per each additional applicant. Approved proposing organisations (APOs) lodging the applications will charge an administrative fee and will require a refundable bond of to be paid. The total APO administrative fee for the 2016-17 year is $11 000, charged in three stages…None of the costs are refundable.” Community Proposal Pilot: What are the costs? https://cpp-apo.net/about/#whatarethecosts.

38 Community Proposal Pilot: What are the costs? https://cpp-apo.net/about/#whatarethecosts.
in the settlement process. The CSP was originally intended as a way for the wider community to join together and sponsor additional refugees for resettlement. Instead, the program has been primarily used by former refugees in a desperate attempt to get their family members to safety in Australia. As discussed below, more must be done to address the overrepresentation of family members applying through the CSP, and more must be done to address the issue of family reunion through both the SHP and the family stream of the migration program.

However, until there are more affordable, equitable and efficient pathways for family reunion, family members will continue to turn to the CSP out of desperation, even if it means taking out significant loans and sacrificing basic essentials in order to afford the high fees. One way of encouraging greater involvement from the wider community is to follow the lead of Canada, where sponsors must either be a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (churches, NGOs and community groups) or a group of five separate community members who join together and share responsibility for a sponsored family. This ensures that the broader community is involved in private sponsorship.

5.5.6  Level of support

A final concern of participants was that people sponsored through the CPP are not eligible for settlement services such as Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and the Settlement Grants Program (SGP). Many reported instances where people sponsored through the CPP have sought assistance from settlement service providers, who have been unable to support them as they are excluded from doing so under their funding grants. As one service provider in Sydney highlighted:

And the level of support is also problematic. You have 500 people who aren’t getting the same level of support as others who came under 200 and 202.

5.6  FAMILY REUNION

The first step is for refugees who have permanent residency and need their family to be reunited here. Family reunion is first step, first priority.

— Hazara man in Western Australia

In 2016, following consultations with refugee community members and service providers, RCOA published the report on barriers to family reunion. Far too often, people from a refugee background who have participated in RCOA’s consultations have reported that the physical security offered by Australia is offset by ongoing mental anguish of family separation. This year’s consultation continued to highlight family separation as one of the most significant issues affecting refugee communities in Australia.

RCOA welcomes the Australian Government’s commitment, through the New York Declaration, to "consider the expansion of … flexible arrangements to assist family reunification". As such, we look forward to working with the Government in improving family reunion for refugee communities.

5.6.1 Impacts of family separation

Family separation is costly, both to refugees and to the wider Australian community. There is enormous pressure on people in Australia to support relatives in refugee situations overseas, which was seen to both compound the stress of family separation and impose a significant financial burden on people attempting to settle in Australia. Family separation deprives people of social and emotional support critical to positive settlement outcomes.

Family reunion is more than just reuniting with loved ones. Many former refugees in Australia still have family members in countries of origin and asylum, where persecution, war, poverty and violence is ongoing. Being able to reunite with their family is one way, and often the only way, people are able to ensure their family is safe. Family separation is also one of the most significant contributors to mental health problems for refugee communities. Barriers to family reunion significantly contribute to the need for increased mental health services and the costs associated with these services. The danger that families may face overseas, and the trauma this causes to family members in Australia was highlighted by Hazara man from Afghanistan:

I don’t care about myself, I’m losing my mental health. Mostly what hurts me is my family are in a very insecure place, I just recently helped them move out of those places and find a new place. I am facing insecurity with my family, my friend says I would not be able to do anything for the community because I have lost my mental health, I want my family to be better than me. I wish the Australian government would do something for these people, first those who are here, then they can help and do for other people.

Likewise, a service provider in NSW shared an example of a client from Iran:

I have a situation with a client where there was a concern for a child who was approaching the age of conscription in Iran, and so because the sponsor’s citizenship has been withheld and the long term waiting and serious anxiety this has caused. They had to just get him out of Iran anyway to a different situation.

Many have been waiting in Australia for so long that they have had children grow up without them. This causes severe stress on the family and creates significant stress and anxiety for applicants. A service provider in NSW shared their experience supporting people separated from family members:

A lot of our clients talk about the most damaging things — one of those is having to continuously communicate with their family overseas and say ‘Look, I’m trying everything to get you here but I can’t because of all these rules’. And they don’t often understand the situation, they say “no, you don’t love me anymore”, you are having an affair or married someone else. They want to keep their relationship going with their spouse and children overseas but it’s such a hard thing for them to do because they can’t give them any good news or hope.

Likewise, a woman from Iraq shared the experiences of her community:

The most common problems for everyone are that some have their families overseas and some have never seen their kids. I know a man who has a child born when he came to Australia that he has never seen.

As highlighted previously and in our report, family reunion significantly impacts people’s ability to settle in Australia. The lack of family reunion creates many problems for people to obtain an education, find and hold stable employment, and develop new social networks. As one community leader from South Sudan noted:

As a community leader, we have so many things that are affecting our life in Australia including those connections with international countries that we spoke about. Having families from different countries, unrest countries and some are neighbouring countries is the biggest issue for us especially for us residing in Australia. It’s affecting us in so many ways.

Some saw the lack of family reunion pathways as a deterrence policy designed to encourage people to return home, as one woman from Western Australia noted:
I actually think the government is hoping all of you will return to your home country of origin, and exactly the same in Nauru and exactly the same in Manus. The longer they keep you waiting they are hoping to break you down and you will just leave. Government knows very well what it did, by preventing people to have family reunification. They know it is the ultimate torture and deterrence to a human being.

5.6.2 Increase in the Special Humanitarian Program

The primary avenue through which people from a refugee background seek to reunite with family members under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program is the SHP. The demand for SHP visas far outstrips the number of places available, even taking into account the recent increase in SHP over the last three years.

Many members of Australia’s refugee communities have expressed confusion and frustration about the prolonged waiting periods for family reunion and the length of time taken to process SHP applications. Many also commented on the limited or lack of information communicated to them about the reasons for these delays or the progress of their applications.

One service provider in NSW highlighted the significant backlog in the SHP:

There’s only I think 5,000 spots for the special humanitarian program, and it’s really hard to manage people’s expectations about that. I think the last letter I saw that had a number there was 45,000-50,000 people, and so people can’t afford a partner visa, their option might be the spots for refugee visa and that’s years worth of waiting. People coming to see us hoping that we can fix that problem. But they’re not understanding our role in that process.

Other participants highlighted that the SHP was not originally intended as a family reunion program. However, over the years it has been changed to become a de facto family reunion program. At the same time, there has been a reduction in family reunion through the general migration stream and it has become more expensive, pushing people to opt for the SHP. As one service provider from Western Australia highlighted:

The other thing that has been discussed and I know it’s come up more recently is the fact that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program has effectively evolved away from the humanitarian program to a family reunion program … What currently really is seen is the people who can’t afford the family stream visas, the partner visas, the child orphan-relatives, the only alternative they have is the humanitarian stream. So that’s where you find family members are using the humanitarian stream as a family reunion stream rather than what it was intended to be, which was a humanitarian program to resettle those that are in the greatest need.

There’s been discussion about whether there’s issues to separate it back to get to its original purpose. I recommend that we have places available more easily in the general migration program for families trying to reunite and that would free up more spaces in the existing program. And for those family ones to be an additional number as well as the original humanitarian program.”

As discussed above in Section 5.3.2, the use of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program as a family reunion program has also seen an increase in primary settlement in the metropolitan areas, to the detriment of regional settlement and other areas around Australia.

5.6.3 Processing of family reunion applications

RCOA continues to hear from former refugees about the hardships they face in applying for family reunion. Many have spoken about waiting years only to be rejected for an administrative reason. Others have expressed distress about the extensive delays they have faced in bringing their family members to Australia, as one former refugee from South Sudan noted:

We know people who have put an application in 2005 and they have just arrived last year, so it is very long time waiting. During processing time, they have lost 2 of their children because death is always with us, just like life. They came here almost after 9 years.

The requirements for family members to undergo interviews and health checks is often impossible for family members who are still in conflict areas or are unable to travel. As a Northern Territory service provider noted:
I've got clients who are trying to sponsor family from places like Quetta, Pakistan, they were given a week notice that they had to be interviewed in Islamabad and then the interview got cancelled and then they were told that the family should travel to Dubai in order for a visa interview to occur. For someone who's got no documents, there is no way to jump on a plane and travel to Dubai.

Likewise, many expressed concerns regarding the narrow definition of family and policies which prevent family members proposing their adult children because they are over 18 and no longer considered ‘dependent’. The definition of ‘immediate family’ has a restrictive definition based on the Western concept of the nuclear family. These narrow definitions do not reflect the family compositions of many refugee communities, leaving people unable to sponsor their family members are they are not considered immediate family.

As a legal service provider explained:

One of the issues is newly arrived refugees of humanitarian entrants who want to sponsor their children who are over 18. The family has split up. Trying to meet that strict criteria about trying to sponsor someone over the age of 18 who is your child and the newly arrived doesn’t accept the government saying they are over 18, prove to us that they are still dependent on you. Dependency meaning that they have to prove they’ve provided financial support for the child, and it’s difficult to prove.

Participants recommended that more places be allocated for family reunion and that a wider definition of family is considered to support those who are trying to sponsor adult children or other family members.

5.6.4 Financial cost

A further barrier to family reunion identified by the participants was the significant costs associated with both the SHP and the family stream of the migration program. While the SHP does not have any visa charges, participants are still responsible for the health checks and airfares, as well as initial orientation and support on arrival.

For those seeking to sponsor family members through the family stream of the migration program, the fees are often beyond their means. Many noted that fees for family reunion also continue to increase. As one former refugee from South Sudan noted:

Even spouse visa we can’t afford that fees. Now it is $10,000 and you are not working. How can you afford $10,000 to bring your wife over? So we really need the Government to look into that issue too. Because most of refugees are on Centrelink support, so how can they afford $10,000 to bring their wife here?

Likewise, a refugee community member in NSW commented on the financial burden family reunion creates:

We are affected financially and emotionally because financially we are working here 24/7 to send money overseas, so we cannot even afford to buy essential and basic items as we are taking casual jobs, so it is not much money. So financially, we are deprived.

Participants recommended that the Government implement concession rates for family reunion applications through the migration program to support refugee family members in reuniting with their loved ones:

I think for certain cohort of clients that have come here as refugees. They shouldn’t be paying a Visa Application Charge if they don’t have access to the split family program. Or they should be paying less of a visa application charge. At the moment, we have a number of clients, they just can’t afford the seven thousand plus for the additional applicants under eighteen it’s another one thousand, two thousand dollars for each child.

5.6.5 Restrictions on family reunion

One of the most pressing issues raised during RCOA’s consultations was the policy of preventing family reunion application for people who arrived in Australia by boat. Directive 62, introduced in 2013, placed family reunion applications from those who arrived by boat as the lowest priority, effectively meaning that their application will never be processed. The Australian Human Rights Commission, in the complaint of CM v Commonwealth of Australia, found that Directive 62 is arbitrary

In 2016, the Minister replaced it with Directive 72, which added a clause which allowed a decision maker to depart from the policy if there are ‘compelling reasons’ involving ‘special circumstances of a compassionate nature’. It is unclear how this provision will be interpreted or implemented, given that most applicants have compelling reasons for reuniting with family members.

The only exception to this policy is for people to obtain Australian citizenship, so their application for family reunion will be considered at the same priority as other applicants. However, a recent Federal Court case has exposed significant delays in processing applications for citizenship for people from refugee backgrounds, especially those who came by boat. The Federal Court, in \textit{BMF16 v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection}, heard a complaint from two applicants who had been waiting over 14 months to have their application decided. The case revealed that 10,000 other people from refugee backgrounds were also experiencing delays in their applications.

The Court found that a delay over 6 months is unreasonable and unlawful. Further, the Court found that “inactivity in the processing of a citizenship application of more than a few months’ duration is unlikely to be reasonably explained by reference to a lack of resources.” The Court also noted that applicants for family reunion can expect to have their applications prioritized. Yet recent research in February 2017 by RCOA has found that over 950 people are still waiting for a decision on their citizenship application, with an average waiting over 16 months. These people must endure significant delays in their citizenship applications before even being able to sponsor their family.

One Hazara man shared the impact of these policies, seeing these barriers as a deliberate policy to discriminate against those who arrived by boat:

\begin{quote}
In 2013 we completed DNA test, medical checks, biometric checks, then they were just waiting for interview and then to get a visa to come here. Then one month, two months, four months, six months and then they change the policy. I must apply for citizenship, February, already everything is done. I’m waiting for test and interview. Nothing. Now I have no option I have to go through the process, the government already know that once we get citizenship we will apply for our family. The government is getting late on citizenship as they know you can bring your family at that point, they are waiting. It is to stop people bringing their families — very deliberate delays. I am 100% sure they are delaying.
\end{quote}

Participants urged the Australian Government to end the restriction on family reunion for people who arrived by boat and to follow the court ruling and process citizenship applications in accordance with the Federal Court decision.

5.6.6 Migration advice

One final concern raised by participants was the lack of funded migration advice for refugee communities seeking to sponsor their family members. Participants noted that migration advice had previously been reduced or removed in grants, leaving many without free or subsidised advice. This has resulted in applicants making invalid applications or being rejected because they have no knowledge of the legal requirements and can’t afford private migration advice. As one service provider in WA highlighted:

\begin{quote}
One of the many gaps in service that are emerging is that with our Department of Social Services (DSS) grants, migration legal services have been defunded. What that means is for refugee clients that want to sponsor their family, here’s the great irony that the government don’t get, on one hand they want to support more 202 sponsors, yet on the other hand the actual migration legal help to fill in the forms, to give them the advice and to help it, has actually been cut. So for our clients there’s no way they can fill in complex migration paperwork to support their sponsorships now because that funding has been cut. We are now reduced to basically advice only and we’ve got 6 to 7 week backlogs of people just for advice, but that’s not going to help humanitarian entrants who can’t fill in forms. They have to go to expensive migration agents… to actually provide that support. And they can’t afford to get that expensive migration legal help. So to me the system is becoming increasingly
\end{quote}
difficult to support, particularly within the 202, even people supporting getting family and relatives out under that program.”

Participants stressed the need to reinstate funded migration advice for family reunion for those who have arrived as refugees.

5.7 ALTERNATIVE MIGRATION PATHWAYS

The Australian Government’s interest in entrants achieving stable employment and self-sufficiency may be buoyed by implementing many of the recommendations made to it in the past in relation to English-language provision, settlement support, and targeted, specialised employment support for people who have come to Australia via the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. As well, the Government could investigate alternative migration pathways that are above and beyond the places available via the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

As RCOA highlighted last year in our submission on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, there has been a significant interest in using alternative pathways to support a greater number of refugees to access protection. This interest in developing alternative migration pathways was reflected in the New York Declaration, in which Australia and other countries committed to consider the “expansion of opportunities for labour mobility for refugees, including through private sector partnerships, and for education, such as scholarships and student visas.”

This commitment to open up alternative pathways is reflected in comments by participants, including a service provider in Sydney:

I quite like the idea of looking at the fact that we have this large migration program and there are people seeking asylum who do have skills. Somehow you look at that migration program and you go: OK, we’ve got 1200 or whatever it is that we are going to resettle somewhere but what about some staff in the Department looking at the refugee producing countries and people who have skills that we could bring in and not be so strict with requirement. In the general migration program having some elements that are allowing some sort of increase of people coming in away from danger and it is complementary to the program. You know… we have a large migration program, no one has a problem with that but surely within that there will be possibilities of getting people out of danger.

Potential areas to explore include: opening up places for refugees within the skilled stream of the migration program, establishing a skills linkage program to connect refugees overseas with employers in Australia, and relaxing some of the restrictions that may prevent refugees from accessing the skilled stream. Other options include developing opportunities for refugees to enter Australia as students to undertake further study. A recent report by the Australian Human Rights Commission recommended that the Australian Government consider developing ‘protection-sensitive’ migration pathways for refugees to enter Australia:

Protection-sensitive migration aims to facilitate refugees’ access to non-humanitarian migration pathways as a means of enhancing protection or providing durable solutions. It involves addressing barriers which may inadvertently exclude people fleeing persecution from migration opportunities (such as documentation requirements, visa fees and carrier sanctions); implementing proactive strategies to extend a wider range of migration options to forcibly displaced people; and providing additional safeguards (such as protection against refoulement) for refugees migrating through non-humanitarian pathways. Enhancing access to these options could both expand pathways for safe entry and create more space within the Refugee and Humanitarian Program for people who cannot access non-humanitarian forms of admission.

Participants recommended that such initiatives be developed, including potentially through the Community Support Program and through the skilled migration program. However, those consulted expressed the importance of ensuring that such alternative pathways are in addition to the resettlement program.

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5.8 TEMPORARY PROTECTION

People who attended our consultations across Australia expressed considerable concern over the use of temporary protection. For people who arrived without a prior visa by air or by sea, they now only have access to a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or the similar Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV). Both visas provide only temporary protection and require people to reapply after a few years.

The use of temporary rather than permanent protection was seen as cruel, unnecessary, and costly — both for the people receiving the visas and for Australia as a nation. Without the certainty of permanency, people will struggle to settle and contribute to Australia. As one former asylum seeker put it:

We will never feel belonging to this country. We are still on a zero. We can’t make any steps. We don’t have any jobs, any visas, our families are far away. Is it that our heart is made of iron? We are getting older and our hair is getting whiter. What’s gonna happen to our children?

The transition once someone is granted a TPV or SHEV was also raised as problematic and even destructive. As one Sydney support worker put it:

You know the biggest issue around the temporary visa is that there is no casework support and when we get the message saying that they’re to be exited because they have a TPV or SHEV, it is seven working days. So they have been waiting in limbo for three to five years. During that limbo time, at some time they got work rights .... They got told to put in an application which they did and then it seems to be between nine and twelve months. … So it is a long drawn-out process. … We have seven days to exit them which is revolting, so people who exited without a visa are in absolute shock.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 10: Restore the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places

RCOA recommends that the Refugee and Humanitarian Program be immediately restored to 20,000 places annually, delinked from onshore permanent Protection Visa grants.

Recommendation 11: Expand the Refugee and Humanitarian Program in light of needs

The Australian Government should, in light of escalating global protection needs, consider further expanding the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 30,000 places annually.

Recommendation 12: Introduce a program to protect children at risk

The Australian Government should, in consultation with key stakeholders, increase its resettlement capacity for children and adolescents at risk by establishing a Children At Risk program. The program could use Australia’s existing systems to receive and support children and adolescents at risk.

Recommendation 13: Conduct routine needs assessments for people settling

All Special Humanitarian Program visa holders should receive routine needs assessments during the initial period of settlement to ensure that they are receiving adequate on-arrival support.

Recommendation 14: Review practice of encouraging Special Humanitarian Program visas

The Australian Government should review its practice of encouraging refugees who are eligible for resettlement in Australia to apply for Special Humanitarian Program visas rather than Refugee visas, so as to avoid undermining the successful settlement of new arrivals.
Recommendation 15: Review communications with visa applicants and proposers

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection should review its procedures for communicating with visa proposers and applicants to ensure that clear information and updates are regularly provided on progress with the processing of applications.

Recommendation 16: Significantly reduce cost of the Community Support Program

The upfront cost of the Community Support Program should be significantly reduced.

Recommendation 17: Set quota for Community Support Program outside the existing Program

The annual quota for the Community Support Program should be separate from the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Recommendation 18: Fund support in case of breakdown of relationship under CSP

Funding should be made available for support services for people proposed under the Community Support Program in cases of emergency or relationship breakdown.

Recommendation 19: Develop a humanitarian family reunion program

The Australian Government should develop a separate Humanitarian Family Reunion Program, outside of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and Migration Program. This should be developed in consultation with former refugee community members and organisations, peak bodies and relevant service providers.

Recommendation 20: Enhance access to family reunion

In the absence of a separate Humanitarian Family Reunion Program, the Australian Government should enhance refugee and humanitarian entrants’ access to family reunion by:

a) considering applications lodged by people who are not formally registered as refugees with UNHCR or host governments but otherwise meet the eligibility criteria
b) waiving application fees or at least introducing application fee concessions for refugee and humanitarian entrants sponsoring family members under the family stream of the Migration Program
c) expanding the availability of no-interest loans to assist proposers in meeting the costs of airfares and/or application fees
d) introducing greater flexibility in documentation and evidence requirements under both the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and the family stream of the Migration Program
e) reviewing eligibility requirements under the family stream of the Migration Program which effectively exclude applicants from refugee backgrounds
f) prioritising processing of family members at immediate risk, and
g) ensuring access to settlement services on arrival and exempting family from the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period.

The Australian Government should consult with stakeholders to develop a process for assessing eligibility for concessions. There should be consultation with refugee communities, practitioners involved in providing support with family reunion applications and other relevant stakeholders to develop a process for assessing eligibility for the concessions referred to above.
Recommendation 21: Remove restrictions on family reunion for those who come by boat

Current restrictions on access to family reunion opportunities for Protection Visa holders who arrived by boat (including changes to processing priorities) be immediately removed.

If the above recommendation is not implemented, people whose applications have been affected by the introduction of retrospective changes to processing priorities be given the opportunity to withdraw their applications and receive a full refund of application fees.

Recommendation 22: Identify families in need of reunification

The Australian Government should enter into dialogue with UNHCR about establishing a process for identifying refugee families that are seeking reunification, facilitating assessment and registration in countries of asylum and prioritising them for referral for resettlement under Australia’s offshore program.

Recommendation 23: Restore funding for migration advice

The Australian Government should restore funding for professional migration advice services under the Settlement Grants program to support refugee and humanitarian entrants in lodging family reunion applications.

Recommendation 24: Alternative migration pathways

RCOA recommends that, in conjunction with refugee community members, industry advisors, and service delivery organisations, the Australian Government develop a suite of alternative migration pathways for people to receive protection via other migration products or processes. These alternative pathways must be in additional to and not in place of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Recommendation 25: Abolish temporary protection visas

The Australian Government should abolish Temporary Protection Visas and grant permanent visas to all people who currently hold Temporary Protection, Temporary Humanitarian Concern or Temporary Safe Haven visas.

If this recommendation is not implemented:

a) All temporary protection visa holders be granted access to settlement services on the same basis as permanent refugee and humanitarian visa holders.

b) Transitional support provided under the Status Resolution Support Services program following the grant of a Temporary Protection Visa should be extended to at least six weeks, with extensions available on a needs basis.

c) Overseas travel restrictions should be lifted.

d) Family reunion options should be considered/

e) The Department of Immigration and Border Protection should develop a comprehensive communications strategy to explain the implications of temporary protection visas to both visa holders and service providers.

f) The Australian Government should consider options for designating certain industries in any location as fulfilling the eligibility criteria for the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa.
6 APPENDIX

6.1 CONSULTATION LOCATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Capital city</th>
<th>Regional</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Canberra (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Auburn (2), Blacktown, Carramar, Fairfield (3), Mount Druitt (2), Parramatta</td>
<td>Coffs Harbour (2), Newcastle (2), Wollongong (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Brisbane (2), Logan (2)</td>
<td>Toowoomba (2)</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Adelaide (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Hobart (2)</td>
<td>Launceston (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Broadmeadows, Croydon, Dallas, Dandenong (2), Ringwood (2), Roxburgh Park, Werribee (3)</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Gosnells, Mirrabooka (2)</td>
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6.2 HOST ORGANISATIONS

Host organisations
- Access Community Service
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Refugee Association and RCOA organised
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
- Brimbank Council
- Cabramatta Community Centre
- Cabramatta Community Centre; Fairfield City Council
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Communicare
- Communities Council on Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Inc
- Companion House
- Diversitat
- Fairfield Youth and Community Centre
- Illawarra Multicultural Services
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Katanning Migrant Resource Centre
- Kildonian UnitingCare
- Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre
- Melaleuca Refugee Centre
- Melaleuca Refugee Centre; Alison Hanley
- Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania) Inc
- Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania)
- Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory
- Multicultural Development Association
- Multicultural Services Centre of WA
- Northern Settlement Services
- Pendle Hill Baptist Church
- Sydney Multicultural Services
### 6.3 LIST OF ACRONYMS

The following acronyms have been used in this submission:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACFID</td>
<td>Australian Council for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>APO</td>
<td>Approved Proposing Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATCR</td>
<td>Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>BID</td>
<td>Best Interests Determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Community Proposal Pilot</td>
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<td>CRRF</td>
<td>Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework</td>
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<td>CSP</td>
<td>Community Support Program</td>
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<td>DIBP</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Border Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>Department of Social Services</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>HSS</td>
<td>Humanitarian Settlement Services</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
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<td>ODA</td>
<td>Overseas Development Assistance</td>
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<td>PPV</td>
<td>Permanent Protection Visa</td>
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<td>RCOA</td>
<td>Refugee Council of Australia</td>
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<td>RSD</td>
<td>Refugee Status Determination</td>
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<td>Settlement Grants Program</td>
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<td>Safe Haven Enterprise Visa</td>
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<td>Special Humanitarian Program</td>
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<td>Temporary Protection Visa</td>
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<td>UHM</td>
<td>Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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### 6.4 VOLUNTEERS

The following list of volunteers contributed to the consultations:

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<tr>
<th>Volunteer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali Raza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amanda Ngo</td>
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<td>Andrew Lok</td>
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<td>Danielle Bird</td>
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<td>Esraa Khaled Abdelkhalek</td>
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<td>Harrison Spratling</td>
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<td>Helena Errey-White</td>
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