



## Media Release: SCOA comment on the 2014-15 Federal Budget

We know all of our members have been eagerly awaiting the announcement of the Federal Budget this year, to gain clarity on the funding of settlement services within the portfolio of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

DSS yesterday in line with the budget announcement have released information on “DSS Grants – A New Way of Working” ([www.dss.gov.au/grants](http://www.dss.gov.au/grants)). Settlement services are within the Families and Community Program, under outcome 2.1. Other program areas within the Families and Community Program include: civil society, strengthening communities, families and children, national initiatives, families and communities service improvement, and financial wellbeing and capability. A diagram mapping out the new structure can be accessed here: (<http://www.dss.gov.au/grants-funding/grant-programmes/dss-grants-a-new-way-of-working>).

Within the range of budget measures the Government has committed \$545 million over 4 years. The level of grant funding within the settlement area is not yet clear, however funding allocated to settlement services for 2014-15 is \$142,839,000 which includes funding to HSS also (funding for HSS services has recently been renewed in most areas of the country, with contracts in place until 2017). Forward estimates show the budget amount dropping down to \$129,032,000 in 2015-2016 and rising to \$132,867 in 2016-17 and \$132,495,000 in 2017-18. There are significant cuts to the “Strengthening Communities” program which is concerning.

DSS have released ‘Programme Information on Settlement Services’ within the new grant arrangements which details the aims and objectives of settlement services. The grant structure includes longer grant terms and simplified reporting and acquittal processes. DSS website states they will be offering extensions to the majority of existing service providers with agreements due to finish by 30th June 2014.

The Budget also sets the size of the Migration program, which will have 190,000 places. Places will include 128,550 Skilled Stream places, 60,885 Family Stream places and 565 Special Eligibility Stream places. The focus of the family stream will be on close family reunion (spouses and children). The Government has removed the additional allocation of 4,000 places within the Family stream for Maritime Arrivals. The Humanitarian Program remains at 13,750 places, including 4,000 Special Humanitarian Program entrants for 2014-15.

The DSS portfolio includes services to older people, which will include \$21 million over 4 years for services to CALD older Australians, and \$11.6 million annually in capital grants for CALD residential aged care.

Within the refugee area the Government has committed to funding the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme and the Community Assistance Support Programme for another year. The Government has also committed funding for 2 years to provide support to unaccompanied humanitarian minors.

SCOA actively works with organisations such as SBS and the Human Rights Commission and the cuts to these organisations will negatively impact the settlement process.

SCOA looks forward to working with the Government and DSS to understand and implement the new grant arrangements within the settlement sector. Greater security of funding will enable the settlement sector to continue to build on the proud record of world leading service delivery to newly arrived migrants and refugees. We will continue to keep our members informed about funding and grant information for settlement services.

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