



Media Release: Additional investment for the settlement sector offset by broader cuts to social services

“The Federal Budget 2016-17 is a ‘mixed bag’ for newly arrived people from refugee and migrant backgrounds with some measures impacting positively on newly arrived communities while others are likely to impede their successful settlement in Australia,” states the Settlement Council of Australia’s CEO, Simon Gordon.

Positive measures in the Federal Budget 2016-17 include:

- \$10.9 million over three years from 2016-17 to provide additional support to recently arrived humanitarian entrants.
- A new Career Pathways Pilot to assist humanitarian entrants with skills, qualifications and vocational level English language proficiency to enter the workforce.
- Increased funding for the National Community Hubs program to engage the expected additional 12,000 new migrants and humanitarian entrants with community supports and activities.
- An additional \$39.8 million in 2016-17 to fund the provision of asylum seeker assistance to support eligible non-Maritime Arrivals while their immigration status is resolved.
- An additional \$12.1 million in 2016-17 and 2017-18 for the supervision and welfare of unaccompanied humanitarian minors (UHMs).

SCOA is particularly optimistic about the announcement to redesign the Adult Migrant English Program to improve client participation, English language proficiency and employment outcomes. “Increasing the number of hours and improving the quality of English language programs is critical to assisting newly arrived communities to settle well in Australia, enabling greater access to employment and further education.”

SCOA also welcomes the announcement to provide \$751.7 million over four years from 2016-17 to establish a *Youth Jobs PaTH* program for young job seekers. “This will improve employment outcomes of newly arrived young people giving them real work experience. It would be great to see this program extended to other ages,” Mr Gordon said.

SCOA is pleased by the previously announced increase in refugee settlement services to support newly resettled Syrian and Iraqi refugees, with the settlement service funding growing by \$122 million to \$264 million. However, SCOA is disappointed that there was no announcement of additional places for refugee resettlement in the budget. “Australia has world class settlement services and given the current international crisis, it is disappointing that no new announcement to build on this has been made,” Mr Gordon added.

The Settlement Council of Australia echoed concerns of cuts to social services raised by ACOSS including \$13 billion from family payments, income support for young and paid parental leave, and a further \$3 billion in cuts to payments and essential services such as cuts to Medicare, dental health and income support for people with disability. “These cuts are likely to have a significant effect on people who are already struggling to make ends meet, including people from refugee and migrant backgrounds,” Mr Gordon said.

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