



SCOA submission to the Migration program 2015-2016:

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the priorities and composition of the 2015-16 Migration Program. Australia's Migration Program remains a key component of Australia's continued prosperity and growth as a nation. SCOA members are directly involved in providing support to the many migrants that choose to make Australia their home.

In considering the size, balance and composition of the Migration Program for 2015-16 it is important to keep in mind the long term demographic impacts that shifts in the program can have. The focus on skilled migration brings many benefits to Australia and is clearly a major positive impact on the economy. A long term impact which needs to be considered in the skilled migration program is the additional flow on impact on the family migration program. Increases in the skilled program can lead to increases in demand within the family program, for example particularly in areas such as parent visas. We understand that the Migration Program and Humanitarian Programs are addressed separately from a planning perspective, but recommend keeping in mind the flow on impacts on demand for family reunion from the humanitarian to the family programs.

The re-introduction of TPVs is a concern to SCOA. The sector is conscious of the need to resolve the status of the legacy caseload in an effective fair manner, and is also conscious of the support needs of the legacy caseload, both in the current and longer term. The long term detrimental effects of temporary status are well documented from the previous iteration of the TPV program. Flexible support structures will be important to support those affected.

SCOA strongly supports family reunion, for all visa categories. The overwhelming experience of settlement agencies points to the benefits of family reunion for individuals and the community as a whole. Ensuring sufficient places are allocated for projected family reunion needs will create long term positive impacts for Australia. Family reunion can strengthen employment outcomes and foster social cohesion.

Regional resettlement is encouraged by the settlement sector as an effective way to strengthen the capacity of the migration program and match migration demand with needs in the Australian community. The settlement sector has demonstrated strong outcomes can be achieved with well-planned and supported regional resettlement, and is keen to continue exploring opportunities represented by resettlement in existing and new regional areas.

SCOA recommends considering provision of greater access to settlement support for migrants to facilitate reaping the potential benefits of the migration program. Provision of support services in settlement is a cost effective early intervention strategy for all cohorts, not just the humanitarian program.

SCOA acknowledges the work done to maintain strong connections between DIBP and DSS as settlement services have moved due to the machinery of government changes. It is important that program coordination and service delivery links remain embedded in the operation and development of settlement services. Timely sharing of information and information on the impacts of changing cohorts of arrivals is essential to ensure settlement services remain targeted and

effective. SCOA applauds the work that has been undertaken to develop the National Settlement Framework and looks forward to the ongoing developments which will be fostered and supported by the “Senior Officials on Settlement Outcomes Group” (SOSOG).