

Settlement Council of Australia

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Media Release

SCOA supports the call to urgently increase refugee resettlement numbers with the settlement sector poised to support

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) supports the call for an urgent action to increase the refugee resettlement numbers in Australia in response to the growing global humanitarian crisis with millions displaced from their homes fleeing the conflict in Syria. The settlement sector in Australia are world leaders in assisting and welcoming newly arrived refugees and are well positioned to support an increase in Australia's refugee intake.

SCOA's Chair Dewani Bakkum said, "The Prime Minister's review of the humanitarian intake is welcomed, although a shift in quota numbers is not enough - an overall increase in humanitarian intake numbers is needed.

"This increase should not be part of the Government's new Safe Haven Enterprise visa scheme, people fleeing need to find certainty and safety. Permanent visas will allow for those who have suffered so much to rebuild their lives, and will allow them to positively contribute to Australia."

"The settlement sector have the knowledge, capacity and experience to assist with a greater number of refugees transition into Australian communities. Regional areas, in particular, are a viable settlement option without some of the resource pressures metropolitan areas face and can help to offset labour and population declines" said Ms Bakkum.

There has been a reduction in the number of people being assisted by the federally funded Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) which supports newly arrived refugees, providing greater capacity within this program to deliver assistance.

Growing evidence supports what we know anecdotally - that refugees are a positive resource economically and culturally. An increase in refugee numbers is supported by a host of Australian State Governments with Premiers of New South Wales, South Australia, West Australia and Tasmania saying they will open their doors to a greater intake of refugees.

Ms Bakkum stressed, "Refugees are human resources with experience and skills to contribute to Australia and they should not be considered a burden. Initial support from HSS providers will allow them to become our future neighbours, colleagues and friends."

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