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Managing Australia's Migrant Intake

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Department in relation to its discussion paper: "Managing Australia's Migrant Intake" ("Discussion Paper").

SCoA represents over 80 agencies in the settlement sector, which comprise the vast majority of agencies across Australia providing settlement support to recently arrived migrants, including those from a refugee background. Our members work directly with a wide range of new arrivals from diverse backgrounds, as well as the mainstream Australian community and various stakeholders.

SCoA believes that Australia should be proud of its multicultural community, and we celebrate the role of settlement services in supporting newly arrived migrants.

We have conducted a national member consultation regarding the Discussion Paper and make this submission on behalf of our members and the resilient, hardworking communities they serve. Prior to responding to the specific questions raised in the discussion paper, we wish to make two general comments which we hope will provide some context for those answers.

1. Understanding and celebrating the value of migration

Australia is a nation built on immigration. It is repeatedly celebrated for its ability to include people from diverse backgrounds, skills and experience, and for the diversity and prosperity that this brings. It is widely accepted that Australia's migration policies have played a crucial role enabling the country to grow, both economically and socially, by welcoming migrants and empowering them to become part of the Australian community.

The contribution of migration to Australia must not be undervalued. Migration contributes to the social and economic vibrancy of Australia in numerous ways and the success of Australia's multicultural population can be seen across the country in our strong and vibrant economy as well as the rich and diverse fabric of our society.

The success of Australia's Migration Program has been achieved through the maintenance of a suitable balance between economic and social objectives. That is, it is understood and must be remembered, that not every class of migrant is expected to yield immediate economic return to Australia. This does not, however, mean that it is true for any class of migrants that they cannot, and do not, contribute to Australia. Indeed, considerable research has been undertaken which demonstrates the capacity of

migrants from a refugee background, for example, to become fully engaged with Australia on economic and social levels, to the mutual benefit of all.¹

For these reasons, we applaud the government’s commitment to a strong and responsive Migration Program and to ensuring that Australia remain an open and welcoming country, without unnecessarily burdensome regulation which imposes unrealistic hurdles for those seeking to settle here.

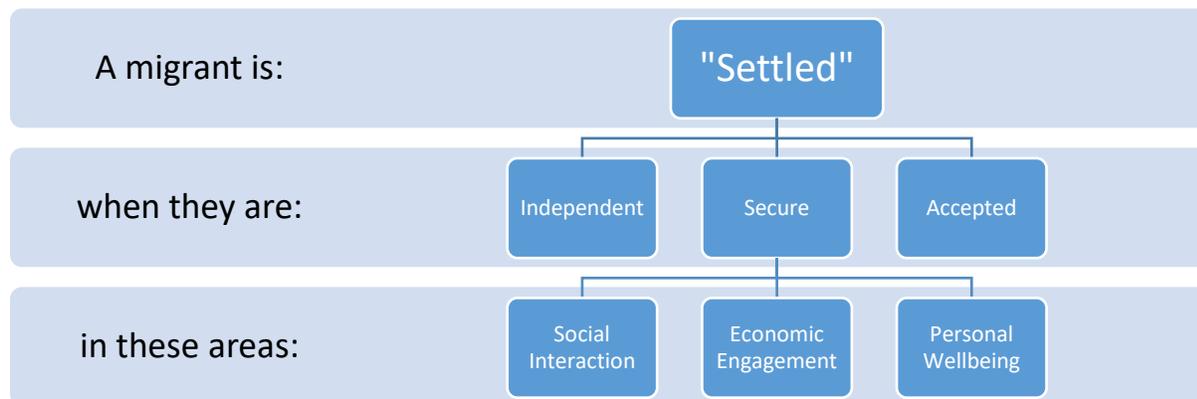
With this in mind, we urge the Department not to lose sight of Australia’s successful history of “nation building”, and to maintain a Migration Program which focuses on people and their contributions to all aspects of life in Australia, rather than simply treating migrants as an economic commodity. With this in mind we are encouraged by the Department’s taking on the Multicultural and Citizenship role which we believe will place it in a strong position to further capitalise on the above.

2. The need for a settlement focus

SCoA and its members witness firsthand the amazing contributions that migrants make to Australia and the true value in providing services that achieve effective settlement for all who make their homes here. SCoA also sees the real challenges that this vulnerable cohort faces in establishing their lives in Australia. This directly impacts Australia’s Migration Program. Once new and emerging communities have effectively settled, their progress will positively impact upon Australia’s economy, society and environment.

SCoA considers that too much of the debate concerning Australia’s Migration Program focuses on visa classes and eligibility, to the detriment of broader, more long-term considerations of a migrant and their family’s settlement journey following arrival in Australia. Settlement outcomes are crucial to achieving all that the Migration Program has to offer, and by adequately factoring in the elements that contribute to successful settlement, and ensuring that any barriers or hurdles are eliminated, we can ensure that our Migration Program can reach its full potential.

In planning the Migration Program over the next five years and into the future, then, it is important to take into account the elements of migrant settlement. SCoA has developed a framework of settlement which takes into account the experiences of migrants and their families while simultaneously contemplating the benefits that achieving “successful settlement” can bring both to migrants and to the broader Australian community.



¹ Hugo, G. (2011), *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants* (DIAC, 2011) and DSS (2016), *Snapshots from Oz: Key features of Australian settlement policies, programs and services available for humanitarian entrants*, p8.

Effective settlement is not an economic process alone. It also has social and personal elements. None of these are mutually exclusive and the failure to effectively participate in one dimension is likely to have multiple repercussions and could severely jeopardise progress in others.²

Each group of people coming to Australia is eligible for different levels of settlement services both on arrival and in the years following. Currently, the majority of on-arrival settlement services are reserved only for migrants from a refugee background. Following the initial settlement period, a broader class of migrants, though still not all migrants, can access certain post-arrival settlement services and English language assistance.

The extent of settlement services should be increased, with commensurate funding, to enable the best possible outcomes for all migrants. This could be achieved, for example, by implementing a needs-based assessment of all new arrivals to ensure that those who need assistance with orientation and/or making linkages in the crucial early stages of settlement are not left to fend for themselves. It should be further extended to ensure that any migrant who falls into exceptional circumstances of hardship (including, for example, as a victim of domestic violence) or who is particularly vulnerable (for example partner visa holders in regional or rural locations) is not precluded from accessing much needed services.

Recent studies, including the Productivity Commission's 2016 report "Australia's Migrant Intake", have confirmed the view that, in addition to migrants on humanitarian visas, other cohorts of migrants may also need assistance to settle.³ Indeed, the Productivity Commission went on to recommend, at Recommendation 8.1 that: *The Australian Government should review the mix, extent and coordination of settlement services (including English-language training and employment services) for all permanent immigrants with the aim of improving their labour market and social engagement outcomes.*⁴

SCoA considers that supporting the successful settlement of migrants should extend to ensuring that communities are adequately funded to receive and settle new arrivals. To this end we note the findings of the recent Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes, which found that "not all LGAs are adequately resourced to provide the necessary support services to help migrants and their families integrate within the community".⁵

While not every migrant will require the full suite of settlement services, the advantage of implementing a needs-based model will be that crucial services are available to those who need them most, irrespective of the visa they hold. This has the potential to further enhance the settlement outcomes of all migrants, without necessarily resulting in a significant budgetary increase.

Recommendation 1

The government should invest in ensuring the provision of settlement services can be extended to all migrants who need them. In this regard, eligibility should be assessed based on the individual needs of a migrant and not the visa held. This should include the extension of specific services (such as qualification and skills recognition, elaborated on below) to all migrants to ensure potential hurdles to settlement are overcome.

² OECD (2015) *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling In*, p19.

³ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p277.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p284.

⁵ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *No one teaches you to become an Australian*, p33.

3. Response to Discussion Paper

General

1. What factors are important to consider in planning the Migration Program over the next five years? Would those factors change over the next 10 or 15 years? If so, how?

SCoA welcomes a move towards long-term planning for Australia’s Migration Program. Long-term planning should involve a cross-government vision of Australia’s population and the steps required to ensure migration achieves the desired benefits while also factoring in environmental, infrastructure and other important needs. This would necessarily involve all levels of government as well as multiple departments at the federal level.

We note that the Productivity Commission, at Recommendation 3.1, supports this approach.⁶

To this end, SCoA recommends to the Department the National Settlement Framework, a “structural blueprint for the three tiers of government... to work in partnership to effectively plan and deliver services that support the settlement of migrants and new arrivals in Australia.”⁷ The strength of this document is its practical approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of settlement services and SCoA believes it could prove useful inspiration for a similar framework for the Migration Program, which is based on quantifiable evidence of Australia’s needs and responsibilities.

Naturally, there should be careful consideration of the linkages between such a plan and the National Settlement Framework to ensure the two documents are interdependent.

Recommendation 2

SCoA recommends that planning for the Migration Program takes a holistic approach, which considers both **global trends**, and the **needs of Australia**, and culminates in the development of an evidence-based framework for long-term migration planning, adopted by all levels of government, and across multiple federal government departments

By way of example, **global trends** may include Australia’s international responsibilities (including humanitarian, family reunification and addressing impending crises such as environmental displacement) as well as new opportunities presented by changing global conditions (eg, technological disruption, the emergence of new skills and the increased movement of people). In this regard we refer to Recommendation 13.2 in the Productivity Commission’s report which, among others, recommended the government trial an approach to “particular, well-defined skill sets that are not occupationally-specific.”⁸ This will enable Australia to cater for emerging trends in global skills.

The **needs of Australia**, on the other hand, require a focus on broad issues such as infrastructure and environmental planning,⁹ as well as workforce and skills demands and addressing Australia’s ageing population.

Equally important is to maintain focus on social cohesion and the need to preserve Australia’s successful multicultural society by means of investing in social infrastructure and inclusive policies. This will reduce

⁶ Productivity Commission (2017), p108.

⁷ *National Settlement Framework* (2016), p1.

⁸ Productivity Commission (2017), p453.

⁹ See, for example, Recommendation 7.1, Productivity Commission (2017), p245.

all forms of racial and religious discrimination and related social divisions, increase social trust and provide an enabling environment to reap the multitude of economic and social benefits of migration. This need was recognised by the Productivity Commission in finding 8.1.¹⁰

2. How can we plan migration to ensure it is balanced to manage the impact on the economy, society, infrastructure and the environment in a sustainable way?

SCoA submits that the movement towards a holistic migration framework, which includes considerations of population needs, infrastructure and environmental demands as well as social and economic imperatives, will be the best way to plan migration into the future.

As part of such a framework, SCoA considers it is crucial that the government reinvigorate its focus on rural and regional settlement opportunities for all classes of migrants. We submit that the government should actively promote and support the settlement of new Australians in rural and regional locations. Migration to such locations presents excellent opportunities, both for migrants and the local communities, to create jobs, drive economic growth and foster a strong sense of community. To this end, we recommend SCoA's 2016 report "Exploring Options for Regional Settlement".¹¹

3. How can governments, industries and communities help ensure infrastructure and services best support migration as well as the broader population?

At the outset, we refer you to [section 2](#) above and SCoA's recommendation that the government include a greater settlement focus when planning the Migration Program, as well as adopting a long-term framework for migration as set out in answer to [question 1](#) above.

More specifically, SCoA submits that developing an understanding of the roles of all actors is an important factor in supporting settlement and therefore obtaining the most out of the Migration Program. The government, industries and communities must all play an active part in planning, and taking action, to support migrants as well as the broader population.

The Australian Government plays a pivotal role in providing social infrastructure and influencing community attitudes to immigration. It is therefore essential that government actively promotes the broad benefits that migrants bring to Australia and builds public awareness and confidence in the Migration Program. It is also crucial that Government maintain strong support for settlement services and community programs that assist in achieving the best possible settlement outcomes. This naturally includes mainstream services that are accessed by migrants. Ensuring government-funded services are culturally responsive will improve settlement outcomes for all new arrivals.

Settlement is a two-way process, requiring both migrants and the receiving community to commit to inclusive and common practices and values, without precluding the celebration and practice of one's own culture.¹² This outcome is crucial to successful settlement and fosters a harmonious and cohesive multicultural society.

¹⁰ Productivity Commission (2017), p274.

¹¹ SCoA (2016), *Exploring Options for Regional Settlement*, <http://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SCoA-Regional-Settlement-Policy-Paper.pdf>

¹² European Council (2004), *Common Basic Principles on Immigrant Integration*, http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf, accessed on 28 November 2016; and UNHCR (2005), *Conclusion on Local Integration* (Executive Committee Conclusion No. 93 (LIII), No. 104 (LVI) 7 October 2005, UNHCR).

Do you think migration is currently being planned with a sufficient view of Australia's long-term needs? If not, how could these considerations be better incorporated?

Broadly speaking, the government can look to elements such as labour market integration and social cohesion, as indicators that the Migration Program has been, on the whole, well-planned over recent years to best serve Australia's long-term needs.

Of course not the only determinant of good planning, the findings of the recent Joint Standing Committee on Migration quote statistics that show an overwhelming majority of migrants are employed following their arrival in Australia.¹³ This is echoed in the recent "Migrant Small Business Report" by CGU which demonstrates the massive contributions migrants make to small business in Australia.¹⁴ To this end, we note the following findings of CGU's Report:

- Annual revenue for migrant-owned businesses is 53% higher than non-migrant;
- 13% of migrant owned businesses surveyed reported earning more than \$3 million per year, compared to 8% of non-migrant businesses;
- One third of businesses plan on hiring new people to grow their businesses during the next five to ten years compared to one in four;
- 47%, plan on generating higher revenue (compared to 38%) and 24% (compared to 17%) intend on expanding to new markets; and
- 25% (compared with 19%) are providing training to young people.

The Scanlon Foundation in its 2016 Mapping Social Cohesion report¹⁵ demonstrates continuing high levels of support nationally for multiculturalism (83%¹⁶), a clear indication that Australia is largely welcoming and supportive of the diverse mixture of cultures it currently enjoys. Similarly, Australians exhibit strong support for our Migration Program. The Report notes the lowest levels of concern in its history,¹⁷ ranking Australia globally as the nation most supportive of its immigration intake.¹⁸

Notwithstanding these promising findings, better planning could greatly assist in achieving greater benefits across the board.

In the area of employment outcomes, for example, this includes by implementing procedures aimed at increasing the recognition of overseas qualifications. Both the recent Joint Standing Committee on Migration and the Productivity Commission highlighted significant shortcomings in Australia's approach to skills recognition for newly arrived migrants.¹⁹ As a consequence, many migrants are left to take on jobs that are below their professional skill level. To highlight this urgent need, we note that in 2011, almost 65% of all recent migrants had a non-school (vocational or higher education) qualification before arrival in Australia; however, only one-third of these had their overseas qualification recognised.²⁰

¹³ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), p77.

¹⁴ For more information see <https://www.cgu.com.au/migrantsmallbusiness/>

¹⁵ Markus, A. (2016), *Mapping Social Cohesion*, (Scanlon Foundation, 2016) accessible at http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/research_surveys/2016/

¹⁶ Markus, A. (2016), p54.

¹⁷ Ibid., p2.

¹⁸ Ibid., p40.

¹⁹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), pp85-92; and Productivity Commission (2017), Recommendation 5.1, p184.

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), *Perspectives on migrants*

It is no longer feasible to maintain a “set and forget” approach to skilled migration which assesses a migrants’ eligibility based on their skills but then fails to assist them to translate those skills into meaningful and relevant work in Australia. To do so is unfair, both to the migrant and to Australia.

Naturally, this problem is exacerbated for other classes of migrant whose skills were not assessed as part of their visa application but who nevertheless have experience and capacity to contribute to the economy. For example, around 60% of humanitarian entrants surveyed in the Building a New Life in Australia longitudinal study held high skill jobs in their former country of residence, while only 26% have those jobs in Australia.²¹

The government must work with relevant industry bodies to provide for streamlined skills ‘translation’ and embark on a nationwide education program to increase trust among the Australian business in overseas qualifications.

SCoA submits that a simple cost/benefit analysis would reveal the great potential this has to benefit Australia. For instance, assisting any migrant with appropriate skills to enter the workforce at a relevant skill level will assist in addressing Australia’s growing underemployment crisis.²²

Recommendation 3

Funding for a simple and transparent national skills and qualification recognition process, coupled with federal investment in bridging courses to assist all migrants who wish to translate overseas skills into Australian jobs, is overdue and must urgently be incorporated into Australia’s Migration Program.

Improving employment outcomes is just one way in which Australia can plan for a more successful Migration Program. In order to secure the best results possible, SCoA repeats its recommendation in [Section 2](#) for a more settlement-focused approach to migration, as well as our answer to [question 1](#) which recommends adopting a holistic framework, designed to achieve the best possible results.

Of relevance, we also note the following recommendations from the recent Joint Standing Committee on Migration report:

- *“Eligibility for the Adult Migration English Program be amended to allow greater flexibility through ... enabling all newly arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds access...”²³*
- *“The Jobactive program include an employment support service specifically designed for newly arrived and longer term migrants”²⁴*

²¹ Department of Social Services. (2017). *Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA): The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants – Findings from the first three waves.*

²² For further discussion see: Parliamentary Library (2017) *Underemployment Statistics: a quick guide* https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/Underemployment

²³ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *Recommendation 4* p56

²⁴ Joint Standing Committee on Migration (2017), *Recommendation 8* p93

4. Does the current size and balance of the Migration Program reflect the economic and social needs of Australia?

Australia has a proud multicultural heritage and is greatly enriched by migrants and refugees from around the world. Migrants, including those from a refugee background, contribute socially, culturally and economically to Australia.

Since 1945, more than 7.5 million people have migrated to Australia.²⁵ The current size and balance of the Migration Program is directly linked to the contributions that migrants can and do make. These contributions take a number of different forms, from economic (contributing to the workforce, innovation, promoting international linkages and as consumers) to social (enriching our culture, promoting social cohesion and vibrant communities).

With this in mind, SCoA urges government to acknowledge the benefits of migration that exist across all of the various streams in both the General and Humanitarian migration programs. It is too simplistic, for example, to suggest that only skilled migrants contribute to the Australian economy. In reality, the benefits of all streams of migration are complementary and no single stream should be given greater weight than the others.

A simple illustration can be seen in the emotional and social support, as well as economic, that family migration provides, which can lead to greater job market integration and improved long-term settlement outcomes. While less tangible, perhaps, than other indicators such as the payment of taxes, these impacts of migration should not be discounted.

SCoA considers that a useful and informed debate on these benefits is hampered by the absence of a reliable and comprehensive collection of data that can be used to measure the impacts of migration on the Australian community.

Access to such data is crucial, both for policy-makers but also, more broadly, to assist in combatting the often misinformed, misleading and/or contradictory rhetoric that exists in the public sphere concerning immigration. The Productivity Commission clearly saw the need for investing in the evidence base in its 2016 report.²⁶

Recommendation 4:

The Government should invest sufficient funds into the collection of timely, accurate and relevant data concerning migration to Australia, across all streams, and its social and economic impact on Australia.

²⁵ APH

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/MigrationStatistics

²⁶ Productivity Commission (2016), Recommendations 9.2, 11.3, 5.2, 13.4 and 13.9.

Planning the Migration Program

5. How could the permanent Migration Program be more responsive to global migration trends, including the rise of temporary migration?

In answer to [question 1](#), SCoA has outlined the need for a long-term plan of the Migration Program which takes into account global trends including humanitarian and family reunification needs and addressing impending crises such as environmental displacement.

In this way, SCoA believes the Migration Program will become essential in alleviating pressure on the Humanitarian Program for refugees and other vulnerable migrants, by opening traditional migration pathways to them. Many migrants from a refugee background could be eligible for migration to Australia under general migration pathways including skilled, student, employer sponsored and/or family. Traditionally, they have been excluded from these streams due to a combination of factors, including:

- cost;
- evidence and documentary limitations;
- the need for urgent outcomes;
- the imposition of specific visa criteria (such as “Genuine Temporary Entrant”) which disproportionately impact migrants from developing countries or countries experiencing turmoil and/or unrest; and
- severe capping and queuing which renders many offshore family visas ineffectual and an unrealistic option for reunification.

With only modest amendments to the current program, these migrants could be empowered to use general migration visas and thereby reduce demand on the Humanitarian Program. This should include allowing partial exemptions or concessions against criteria such as visa application charges, points test requirements in skilled visas, English language ability and the imposition of other criteria. In addition, such applicants could be greatly assisted by:

- fast-track processing arrangements;
- introducing quotas for vulnerable applicants;
- flexibility around documentation requirements; and
- delaying the need to satisfy some criteria until following arrival.

This would have countless benefits for Australia, by enabling these migrants to start from a position of independence and purpose. Provided appropriate support services were funded and available to them on arrival, SCoA is confident such migrants would soon become fully contributing members of society.

Naturally, it is crucial that on-arrival services be provided to such migrants to assist them in achieving a level of independence commensurate with the general population. This should include traditional settlement services as well as enhanced English language and cultural training, bridging courses and assistance with skills recognition (see further discussion of these items above).

Recommendation 5

The Department should give consideration to implementing a series of alternative pathways for traditional ‘humanitarian entrants’ to access visas within the general Migration Program, including by relaxing, delaying or exempting specific visa criteria and fast tracking application processes.

In respect of the growing trend towards temporary migration, SCoA urges against forcing migrants into a provisional or temporary status where they should otherwise be given opportunity to settle permanently in Australia.

While we note that there is a global trend towards migrants electing to take up temporary migration options, we are concerned that an over-reliance on temporary migration will significantly impact settlement prospects as temporary migrants by their very nature do not have the same opportunities to enjoy settlement in Australia and cannot access the same services as permanent migrants. Furthermore, the Productivity Commission has cautioned that the impacts of an over reliance on temporary migration are poorly understood²⁷ and therefore care must be taken in pursuing this as a major objective of the Migration Program.

Simultaneously, SCoA sees vital importance in protecting pathways to permanent residency for temporary migrants who, following the requisite period of time in Australia, have met all visa obligations and contributed to society and for whom permanent settlement is a mutually beneficial option. Existing pathways could be enhanced and expanded to provide logical and suitable pathways for such temporary migrants to permanently settle in Australia.

In this regard, we urge the government to desist from using negative rhetoric in discussing such migrants by suggesting that they taking advantage of Australia's visa system, when they are simply following lawful visa pathways. Indeed, those migrants provide a perfect example of one way in which the combination of temporary and permanent visa options can truly work to the benefit of Australia.

6. Should we have planning levels for the permanent Migration Program? Should we plan for some streams of migration but not others? Should we have planning levels for any or all of the temporary programs?

SCoA believes that adopting and regularly reviewing planning levels across the Migration Program will ensure the best possible long-term outcomes for Australia and the appropriate resourcing of settlement services.

7. How do family and skilled migration differ? Should these difference mean we plan for each differently?

As discussed above, SCoA views both family and skilled migration as being of crucial importance to Australia, both economically and socially. The two streams have increasingly complementary objectives. SCoA therefore believes that both must be carefully considered when preparing a long-term plan for the Migration Program.

8. Is Australia maximising the benefits of independent unsponsored migrants in the Migration Program? How can the Independent stream be strengthened?

SCoA believes that independent migrants can be particularly vulnerable to isolation, underemployment and changes of circumstances following their arrival in Australia. It is therefore crucial that they be included in any broader consideration of on-arrival settlement services for migrants arriving in Australia. We are confident that the settlement sector is ideally-placed to assist such migrants under programs such as the Settlement Grants Program provided appropriate resourcing is ensured.

²⁷ Productivity Commission (2016), p369.

Family Migration

9. How can we ensure family migration best enables Australians to reunite with overseas family members, while supporting the Australian community?

SCoA considers that there is a strong case for ensuring that family reunion for refugees and all vulnerable migrants is given support and priority and that appropriate settlement services are made available to those family members. SCoA does not believe that to do so would necessarily result in significant economic burden to the Australian community.

As mentioned above, there are economic benefits in family migration that, while in some cases less tangible than the skilled migration stream, still contribute significantly to the Australian economy. These can include:

- Promoting faster settlement outcomes for all involved by enabling access to a support network;
- Limiting the need for overseas remittances of Australian earned income;
- Contributing to the economy as consumers; and
- Enabling working-age migrants to seek sustainable employment by giving them access to family members for, among others, childcare and emotional support.

SCoA understands the government's desire to avoid increased costs to the Australian public and believes the above considerations mitigate some of the perceived costs of family reunion. However, we submit that there is an even greater social and humanitarian imperative that outweighs any actual cost. The social benefits include:

- Alleviating pressure on Humanitarian Program;
- Avoiding the need for people to take significant risks out of desperation to be together;
- Mitigating mental health risks;
- Avoiding the trauma caused by separation; and
- Protecting vulnerable Australians from entering into significant debt in order to fund existing expensive reunification options.

SCoA considers that a further strategy would be to include options for temporary migration for family members of former refugees. Currently, these potential applicants are all but precluded from accessing Tourist or Visitor visas due to the application of strict criteria such as the "Genuine Temporary Entrant" requirement. SCoA considers there are mechanisms other than this onerous requirement which can and do achieve a similar goal, but which do not prevent family of former refugees from visiting Australia.

Recommendation 6

Options for family reunification, both temporary and permanent, are crucial, and bring both economic and social gains to Australia. They should therefore be given priority for vulnerable Australians who wish to be reunited with family members overseas.

10. How can we best manage and plan for primary visa applicants as well as the family they bring with them on their visa? Should secondary applicants be counted separately from primary applicants?

For the reasons mentioned above, SCoA sees significant value in promoting migration of family units, and therefore submits that the existence, or otherwise, of secondary visa applicants should not impact a potential migrant's prospects of obtaining a visa. On the other hand, we firmly believe that secondary applicants must be factored into the allocation of settlement services to ensure that they, too, become contributing members of the Australian community.

4. Conclusion

SCoA believes that Australia should be proud of its Migration Program and should celebrate the contribution that migration has made to this country. It is vital that in planning for the future of the program, Australia must not depart from the open and welcoming society that has developed into over the past century.

The role of migration policies in impacting a migrant's long-term settlement outcomes must not be underestimated.

For these reasons, SCoA urges the Department to carefully consider each of the recommendations made above. We trust that they will assist in setting the Migration Program for the years ahead and are confident that, if adopted, they will contribute to achieving a balance between the needs of the state and the individual, thereby ensuring that Australia can maintain a positive and successful Migration Program to the benefit of all.

On behalf of the settlement sector, we thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. SCoA is keen to re-establish its close relationship with the Department and to work with it in its planning for, and settlement of, future waves of migrants arriving in Australia under both the Humanitarian and General Migration Programs.

If the Department wishes to further discuss the contents of this submission, or any other matter of relevance, please do not hesitate to contact our Chief Executive Officer, Nicholas Tebbey on 02 6282 8515 or info@scoa.org.au.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dewani Bakkum', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dewani Bakkum, Chairperson