Settlement Council of Australia

Submission: Australia's Humanitarian Program 2025–26

Settlement Council of Australia

August 2025

The Settlement Council of Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which migrants and refugees settle across Australia, and on which our sector operates.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

About the Settlement Council of Australia

The Settlement Council of Australia is the peak body representing Australia's migrant and refugee services and allied organisations. We provide leadership to the settlement sector and broader society to enable people of migrant and refugee backgrounds to experience positive settlement outcomes. We represent over 130 member organisations nationally, all working towards a shared vision for an Australia where all people of migrant and refugee backgrounds belong, thrive and experience fulfilling lives.

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Introduction

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission regarding Australia's Humanitarian Program 2025–26. Australia's commitment to protecting and resettling refugees is realised through its Humanitarian Program. This Program is a cornerstone of the nation's international protection obligations, providing a durable solution for people displaced by conflict, persecution, and human rights violations. The Humanitarian Program is strengthened and sustained by Australia's world-class settlement services, which are internationally recognised for their quality, innovation, and focus on long-term integration.

These settlement services play a critical role in ensuring that humanitarian entrants are equipped to begin their new lives in Australia. From the moment of arrival, they provide essential supports—housing, health care, English language training, employment pathways, education, and community connections—that are vital for successful settlement and social cohesion.

SCOA acknowledges and values the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to the Humanitarian Program. This commitment is a reflection of Australia's enduring humanitarian values and our willingness to contribute to global responsibility-sharing, while also enriching the social, cultural, and economic fabric of our own communities.

SCOA welcomes the Government's commitment to maintaining a program of 20,000 places in 2025–26, but notes that this remains below the target of 27,000 places outlined in the Labour Party's 2023 National Platform. In the context of unprecedented global displacement—now exceeding 123 million people—there is a clear need for Australia to scale up its contribution. Increasing the intake, alongside robust settlement support, will enable Australia to meet its international obligations and support the Government's priorities of social cohesion, economic participation, and multicultural community development.

SCOA welcomes the establishment of the new Office for Multicultural Affairs, which will assume responsibility for settlement policy and programs. This development represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the alignment between multicultural policy, social cohesion initiatives, and the settlement system. Centralising settlement within the Office for Multicultural Affairs will enable a more coordinated, whole-of-government approach to supporting humanitarian entrants and migrant communities. SCOA looks forward to working closely with the Office to ensure that the settlement sector's expertise, along with the voices of people with lived experience, informs program design and implementation. This will help ensure that settlement services remain responsive, culturally competent, and equipped to deliver the strong outcomes that have positioned Australia as a world leader in refugee resettlement.

Migration is a complex area for discussion composed of permanent migration streams, temporary visa grants and the humanitarian program. The value and contribution of humanitarian entrants to Australian society and the social and economic benefits they bring has been well documented.[1]

[1] Deloitte Access Economics (report commissioned by Oxfam, August 2019), *The economic and social impact of increasing Australia's humanitarian intake*, https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/economic-social-impact-increasing-australias-humanitarian-intake.html ; Hugo, G. (2014), "The economic contribution of humanitarian settlers in Australia", *International Migration*, 52(2), 31-52, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/imig.12092?casa_token=qm-XcE2-XkUAAAAA:xjoXxFWlNvSnQSPZDc1BeRu40NyFyuoThbECsbmrXJvxzbo1WH7jnfevXTYBoaQZZEJiRGF1aUq_h_o

It is a source of pride for our settlement sector that we have one of the best settlement systems in the world and that Australia is committed to a generous and flexible humanitarian and settlement program that meets Australia's international protection obligations. It is of deep concern to our members that humanitarian entrants have become part of the political football of blame, be it in the housing debate, transport or social disharmony.

In responding to Australia's Humanitarian Program 2025-26 Discussion paper, we call again on politicians, political parties, political and social commentators to stop demonising refugee and humanitarian cohorts in the context of the wider discussion around Australia's migration system.

SCOA provides this submission in its capacity as the peak body for settlement services in Australia and a leading national voice for refugees and migrants. Our recommendations reflect the expertise of our 130 member organisations and the lived experiences of the communities they serve.

To inform this submission, SCOA convened a meeting of the **CEO Collective**, bringing together over 50 CEOs and senior leaders from settlement and multicultural community organisations across the country. This consultation captured perspectives from metropolitan, regional, and rural areas, ensuring the submission is grounded in the practical realities, challenges, and opportunities experienced by those delivering settlement services on the ground.

Below we have outlined several recommendations to enhance the program. Our responses are arranged as per questions raised in the Discussion Paper.

Responses to questions in Discussion Paper

Question 1: Composition of the 2025–26 Humanitarian Program

SCOA welcomes the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to a program of 20,000 places in the Humanitarian Program for 2025–26. This represents a continued investment in Australia's international protection obligations and recognition of the economic and social benefits that humanitarian entrants bring to the nation.

However, SCOA notes that this figure remains well below Australia's stated ambition in the Labour Party's 2023 National Platform to increase the intake to 27,000 places. In the context of unprecedented global displacement—now exceeding 123 million people—the need for Australia to scale up its contribution is clear. Comparable resettlement countries such as Canada and Germany have significantly higher refugee and resettlement figures. Australia's intake should reflect our capacity, settlement infrastructure, and global leadership role.

SCOA recommends that the 2025–26 Program set a trajectory toward the 27,000-place target, with a balance between responding to emerging crises and maintaining commitments to protracted situations. This increase will better position Australia to meet the growing demand for protection while supporting the Government's stated priorities on social cohesion, economic participation, and multicultural community development.

Proportion between Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program

SCOA supports a balanced composition between the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) categories, with the majority of places allocated to the Refugee category to ensure access for the most vulnerable, including those referred by the UNHCR. However, SHP remains a critical pathway for family reunion, which has a direct and positive impact on settlement outcomes, community stability, and retention in regional areas.

Family reunion processing delays—often exceeding eight years—are causing significant hardship and undermining settlement outcomes. SCOA supports a strengthened SHP allocation to address this backlog and ensure families can reunite in a timely manner. Regional communities have noted that family connection is a key factor in the retention of humanitarian entrants in regional areas. Humanitarian entrants are also critical contributors to regional economies, including addressing skills shortages in construction, aged care, and essential services.

Settlement capacity and integration

SCOA acknowledges concerns raised by settlement providers regarding capacity—particularly housing and health—in both metropolitan and regional locations. These challenges must be addressed in tandem with intake increases, rather than used as justification to limit humanitarian arrivals. Housing, health, and skills recognition investments will enhance settlement success and public confidence.

The Program's composition should be informed by a realistic assessment of Australia's settlement infrastructure, with housing and essential services supported by whole-of-government coordination.

Recommendation 1: Increase the Humanitarian Program intake

Commit to a phased increase of the annual intake to 27,000 places, in line with the Labour Party's National Platform, balancing protracted and emerging crises.

Recommendation 2: Maintain a balanced program composition

Retain a majority allocation to the Refugee category, while ensuring a strong SHP component to facilitate family reunion and improve settlement outcomes.

Question 2: Responding to Crises While Balancing Commitments

The global humanitarian landscape is facing unprecedented pressures, with multiple large-scale crises unfolding alongside long-standing protracted situations. Australia's Humanitarian Program must remain flexible and responsive to new crises, while maintaining its commitment to those who have been waiting the longest for protection.

Over the past several years, Australia has shown the capacity to respond rapidly to major events, including crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan. These responses have demonstrated agility in visa processing and pathways but have also highlighted gaps in consistency, equity, and resourcing. Variations in visa class, entitlements, and settlement support across different cohorts have created challenges for service providers and communities.

SCOA supports the establishment of a structured, transparent emergency allocation mechanism within the Humanitarian Program to respond to emerging crises, without displacing places for protracted caseloads. A one-off increase in the Program size in years of significant crisis should be considered to address surges in displacement.

Maintaining commitments to protracted situations

Cohorts affected by protracted displacement—including Afghan, Myanmar, and African refugee populations—continue to experience extended delays in resettlement. Stakeholders consistently stress the need for equitable treatment across all cohorts, rather than prioritisation based solely on geopolitical visibility or public attention.

The Program should adopt a balanced intake that ensures proportional allocations to both protracted situations and emerging crises. Transparent communication about allocation decisions will build confidence in the fairness of the Program.

Consistency and equity in crisis responses

The CEO Collective identified the need for **consistent entitlements** for people arriving from different crises. Variability in work rights, access to Medicare, income support, and settlement services undermines equity, social cohesion, and service delivery. SCOA recommends a **baseline package of support** for all humanitarian arrivals through emergency responses, ensuring essential services are available irrespective of the visa type granted.

Recommendation 3: Establish a structured emergency allocation

Introduce a flexible emergency allocation within the Humanitarian Program to respond to new crises without displacing places for protracted caseloads, with scope for one-off increases in years of significant global displacement.

Recommendation 4: Ensure consistency and equity in crisis responses

Adopt a baseline support package for all humanitarian entrants arriving through emergency pathways, including work and study rights, access to Medicare, and essential settlement services, to promote equity and social cohesion.

Question 3: Addressing the Community Support Program Oversubscription and Family Reunion Backlog

The Community Support Program (CSP) is a valuable complementary pathway that enables individuals, community groups, and businesses to directly contribute to Australia's humanitarian efforts. It also serves as an important mechanism to support family reunion, which is a key factor in successful settlement, integration, and retention, particularly in regional areas.

However, the CSP is currently facing significant challenges. Processing times have grown from 6–12 months in 2022–23 to a minimum of eight years as of June 2025, due to demand far exceeding available places. The program's current structure risks undermining community confidence and the ability of diaspora communities to meaningfully contribute to humanitarian outcomes.

Transparency and program management

Stakeholders expressed concern over the lack of transparency around the CSP pipeline. The absence of clear, regularly updated data on the number of applications in process has created uncertainty for sponsors and proposers. SCOA recommends the Department of Home Affairs provide regular public updates on pipeline numbers, and introduce clear allocation management, including caps per Approved Proposing Organisation (APO), to ensure equitable access and realistic expectations.

Program scale and allocation

The CSP allocation of 1,500 places annually is insufficient to meet the demonstrated demand. Stakeholders recommended an increase to at least 2,500 places annually, in line with available community sponsorship capacity and demand. This increase should be accompanied by robust program management to prevent future backlogs and maintain program credibility.

Family reunion pathways

Many CSP applications are, in practice, for family reunion. Stakeholders stressed that family reunion should not be seen as a misuse of the program but as a vital component of settlement success. SCOA supports the introduction of a dedicated, affordable family reunion pathway outside of CSP and SHP allocations. This would reduce pressure on the humanitarian program while ensuring families can reunite in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Family reunion strengthens community ties, supports mental health, and encourages long-term retention, especially in regional areas where social support networks are essential to sustaining resettlement.

Recommendation 5: Increase CSP allocation and improve transparency

Increase the annual CSP allocation to at least 2,500 places, alongside regular public reporting on application pipeline numbers and equitable allocation management.

Recommendation 6: Establish a dedicated family reunion stream

Introduce a separate, affordable family reunion program outside of CSP and SHP to reduce pressure on the Humanitarian Program and support positive settlement outcomes.

Question 4: Planning and Coordinating Responses to Emergency Humanitarian Crises

Australia's recent responses to major global crises—including Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan—demonstrate both the Government's commitment to international protection and the capacity to act rapidly when required. However, these events have also highlighted the need for greater consistency, coordination, and forward planning to ensure effective responses that support both displaced populations and the communities welcoming them.

Proactive and coordinated planning

The Humanitarian Program's crisis response has, in recent years, tended to be reactive, responding to events as they occur. Stakeholders emphasised the need for a structured, proactive approach to crisis preparedness that allows Australia to mobilise quickly and consistently across multiple scenarios.

A coordinated approach should include:

- A framework for emergency response that identifies triggers, processes, and consistent eligibility criteria for rapid humanitarian action.
- Scenario planning for crises of varying scale, ensuring that Australia can respond proportionately without undermining commitments to protracted situations.
- Close coordination between Department of Home Affairs, Services Australia, DSS, Health, Employment, State and Territory governments, local councils, and industry to ensure settlement capacity and services are in place before arrivals. Investment from multiple portfolios reflects that humanitarian entrants contribute not only to humanitarian objectives but also to economic growth, skills needs, and regional development.

Consistency and equity across crisis responses

Recent crises have seen variations in visa classes and entitlements—including differences in access to work rights, Medicare, income support, and settlement services. These

inconsistencies create inequity among humanitarian entrants and place strain on settlement services and state systems.

SCOA recommends a baseline package of rights and supports for all humanitarian entrants arriving via emergency pathways, irrespective of nationality or visa subclass. This package should include work and study rights, Medicare access, and essential settlement services as a standard.

Leveraging community and diaspora capacity

Diaspora communities play a critical role in welcoming and supporting emergency arrivals, providing cultural connection, housing assistance, and social support. However, community-led efforts are often under-resourced. SCOA recommends dedicated funding to support diaspora-led initiatives and additional resources for settlement providers to engage intensively during crisis responses.

Recommendation 7: Establish a structured emergency humanitarian response framework

Create a national framework for emergency humanitarian responses, including clear triggers, consistent visa settings, and coordinated planning across portfolios to ensure equitable, timely, and effective responses.

Recommendation 8: Fund diaspora and community-led crisis support

Provide dedicated funding for diaspora-led initiatives and additional resources for settlement providers to deliver intensive engagement and support during emergency humanitarian responses.

Complementary Pathways must be 'Additional' and Permanent

In addition to the responses to the questions outlined above, SCOA wishes to reaffirm the consistent and long-standing advocacy of the settlement and multicultural sectors for **complementary pathways to be truly additional to the core Humanitarian Program**. While complementary pathways such as the Community Support Program (CSP), the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP), Refugee Student Settlement Pathway Pilot and the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot are important and innovative mechanisms, drawing their places from within the existing humanitarian quota undermines the integrity and overall capacity of the Program.

While the current government has committed to making community-sponsored programs additional, at present, visas allocated are from within the existing humanitarian intake with the

exception of the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot, where places are drawn from the skilled stream.

All of these programs should be in addition to the Humanitarian Program so as to not substitute UNHCR-referred refugee places. Australians motivated to sponsor refugees would like to see their voluntary financial and in-kind contribution result in additional refugees finding a safe place in Australia. In the existing model where places are drawn from core intake, this would give the impression that their contribution is not making a difference; they are simply taking over the government's responsibility. Making the complementary places additional would motivate more individuals to sponsor refugees as they would see a clearer impact of their efforts.

Recommendation 9: Additionality of complementary pathways

All complementary pathways – specifically the Community Sponsorship Program (CSP) and the Community Refugee and Integration Pilot (CRISP) should be made additional to the humanitarian intake as soon as practicably possible.

SCOA acknowledges and thanks the Australian Government for its decision to make the **Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)** a permanent feature of the Humanitarian Program from 2026. This decision reflects the Government's recognition of the strong role that community-led sponsorship plays in enhancing settlement outcomes and building social cohesion. Making CRISP permanent provides certainty for sponsors, communities, and humanitarian entrants, and demonstrates Australia's leadership in innovative resettlement pathways.

Similarly, the **Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot**, which is set to conclude in June 2025, should be continued and expanded as a permanent complementary pathway for skilled refugees to come to Australia. This program, which allows skilled refugees a pathway to live and work in Australia recognises the potential and valuable contributions that skilled refugees can make to the Australian workforce and society as a whole. Skilled refugees bring a range of skills and experiences from their home countries, which can enrich workplaces and foster innovation. The program allows Australia to showcase its commitment to humanitarian principles, while also benefiting from the contributions of skilled refugees to its society and economy. The program is additional to the current intake, has proved its success, and is not only cost-neutral, but in fact creates revenue for the government through visa fees and tax receipts, without the provision of access to social welfare or government-funded settlement support.

It should be noted that the visa fees associated with the skilled refugee pilot are substantial, particularly compared to standard skilled-visa fees in comparable countries. This is a significant disincentive to participation in the pilot. We strongly urge a reduction in these fees – refugees arriving through this program already make a net-positive economic contribution to the Australian government from the day they arrive. Therefore, the high visa fees are unwarranted in this circumstance, particularly given the social, human rights, and international credibility this program provides the government. Insofar as visa fees remain a feature of the program, a portion or all of these fees should be redirected into supporting the program, including in providing the resourcing required to maintain effective engagement with employers, and fund the settlement support necessary for the success of the program which is currently an

additional cost to employers. These changes would reduce the up-front costs to employers, which is a significant deterrent at present to many more employers participating in the program.

There is also a missed opportunity in the current settings which limit applications to offshore applicants. There are many temporary humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers in Australia who would be eligible to join the skilled refugee pilot. We urge the government to allow these cohorts of onshore migrants to apply for the skilled refugee pathway when they meet the eligibility. This pathway would be an optimal solution from both a humanitarian entrant and government perspective to resolve temporary status.

Permanency of the skilled labour pathway is an obvious next step, and provides the kind of long-term certainty that is necessary for effective engagement with employers. Adjustments to the up-front costs would also incentivise an even greater number of employers to participate.

Recommendation 10: Permanency and reforms of the Skilled Refugee Pilot

The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot, which is set to conclude in June 2025, should be continued and expanded as a permanent complementary pathway for skilled refugees to come to Australia. As part of making the program permanent, the visa fees should be substantially reduced, or redirected into supporting the program. It should also include a pathway for onshore applications.

Settlement support for complementary pathways arrivals

It is important that all migrants and refugees who arrive in Australia are able to access settlement support. Refugees arriving through complementary migration pathways are likely to have similar experiences and needs to other refugees when it comes to navigating life in Australia. While the pathways of arrival may differ, these individuals have fled their home countries due to persecution, conflict, or other dire circumstances and have sought safety and protection in Australia. Like any other refugee, those arriving through complementary migration pathways face various challenges and adjustments when settling into a new country. These challenges may include language barriers, cultural differences, limited social networks, and unfamiliarity with the local systems and services. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that adequate settlement support is available to assist these individuals in their integration process.

A common feature of complementary pathways is alternative forms of settlement support, such as community sponsorship groups. In other pathways, settlement support becomes an additional costs to the sponsor, such as the CSP and the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot – in these cases paying for settlement support can be a disincentive. Further, it is our position that all refugees arriving through complementary pathways should have access to government funded settlement services as a safety net. Currently, Australian settlement services have complex eligibility criteria – instead, we would like to see a needs-based approach where all refugees are eligible for at least a very basic level of support from funded services if they require it.

Settlement support services play a vital role in helping refugees adapt to their new environment and build a successful life in Australia. These services encompass a range of initiatives,

including language classes, employment assistance, housing support, healthcare access, educational opportunities, and cultural orientation programs. While complementary pathways may mean these services are not needed at all by many refugees, or may be less intensive, universal eligibility of these services are critical to the sustainability of complementary pathways, ensuring sponsors feel well-supported, and delivering the kind of equitable outcomes necessary to sustain the long-term social license for the program.

Recommendation 11: Consistency of settlement support across arrival pathways

Settlement support should be available to all migrants and refugees who arrive in Australia regardless of their mode of arrival.

Intersectionality, Inclusion and Equitable Access

The experience of forced migration is not uniform. Refugees and humanitarian entrants face varying and often compounding barriers to settlement based on intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including gender, disability, age, sexuality, ethnicity, faith, and migration status. Applying an intersectional lens to the design and delivery of Australia's Humanitarian Program is essential to ensuring that all people—particularly those most marginalised within refugee communities—are able to access safety, support, and opportunity on an equitable basis.

Women and girls from refugee backgrounds face a disproportionate impact of displacement and resettlement. This includes increased risks of gender-based violence (GBV), both during displacement and after arrival, as well as significant barriers to healthcare, housing, and sustainable employment. The Humanitarian Program must explicitly recognise these heightened risks and embed gender-sensitive and trauma-informed crisis responses across all humanitarian and settlement policies.

Economic participation also presents a major challenge for refugee women. Women are often overrepresented in low-paid and insecure care and service sectors, face ongoing difficulties in the recognition of overseas skills and qualifications, and experience limited access to affordable childcare—all of which limit their capacity to participate fully in the labour market. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated action, including targeted employment pathways, childcare support, and stronger collaboration with employers to create inclusive workplaces.

The role of diaspora and grassroots women-led organisations is critical in supporting refugee women and families. These organisations often act as trusted community intermediaries, providing culturally appropriate assistance, case support, and community-based settlement solutions. Despite their vital role, they remain significantly under-resourced. Greater investment in women-led organisations would strengthen capacity to provide support, particularly in crisis contexts.

Family separation continues to disproportionately affect women-led households and caregivers. Prolonged separation from spouses, children, and extended family members creates enduring emotional, financial, and caregiving burdens. Strengthening family reunion pathways is not only a matter of social justice but also essential to supporting women's safety, mental health, and long-term settlement success.

Disability inclusion remains an under-recognised factor within the Humanitarian Program. Refugees with disability—including physical, sensory, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities—often arrive with little or no access to assistive devices, health care, or education in their countries of origin or transit. Upon arrival in Australia, many face exclusion from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) due to eligibility requirements or systemic barriers such as inaccessible information, limited interpreting services, or a lack of culturally appropriate outreach. A national approach is needed to integrate disability inclusion into the humanitarian response from pre-departure through to long-term settlement.

An inclusive and intersectional Humanitarian Program must also address the specific needs of LGBTQIA+ refugees, older humanitarian entrants, and young people navigating complex transitions in education and employment. In addition, temporary humanitarian visa holders—including those on SHEV and TPV—continue to experience uncertainty, social isolation, and unequal access to services. These factors exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities and undermine social cohesion.

Embedding intersectionality into policy and program design

To build a truly inclusive Humanitarian Program, intersectionality must be embedded not only in service design but also in data collection, funding frameworks, and evaluation measures. This includes disaggregated data on gender, disability, age, visa status, and economic participation. Meaningful inclusion of people with lived experience of multiple forms of marginalisation is essential in the design, governance, and oversight of programs.

SCOA urges the Department of Home Affairs and the Office for Multicultural Affairs to adopt a whole-of-government intersectional approach that recognises and addresses the diversity within refugee experiences. A human rights-based model, grounded in the principles of equity, accessibility, cultural safety, and gender responsiveness, will ensure that the Humanitarian Program not only protects those at risk but also uplifts those most often left at the margins.

Recommendation 12: Adopt an intersectional and gender-responsive approach

Embed intersectionality and gender responsiveness across the Humanitarian Program, ensuring equitable access, targeted support for marginalised groups, and dedicated investment in women-led and grassroots organisations.

Conclusion

The Settlement Council of Australia reaffirms its strong support for a generous, flexible, and well-resourced Humanitarian Program that meets Australia's international protection obligations while supporting cohesive, vibrant, and economically resilient communities.

This submission has outlined practical recommendations to strengthen the 2025–26 Program: increasing the overall intake in line with the Government's stated ambition, ensuring a balanced composition between Refugee and Special Humanitarian categories, embedding a structured mechanism for responding to emerging crises, reforming the Community Support Program, and making all complementary pathways genuinely additional to the core humanitarian intake.

In addition, SCOA has emphasised the importance of embedding intersectionality, gender responsiveness, and equitable access across the Humanitarian Program to ensure that all cohorts—particularly those facing compounded vulnerabilities—can benefit fully from Australia's protection commitments.

These measures, alongside consistent settlement support and closer alignment between multicultural and settlement policy under the new Office for Multicultural Affairs, will enable Australia to respond effectively to global humanitarian needs and reinforce our standing as a global leader in refugee resettlement.

Adopting these recommendations will deliver not only better outcomes for humanitarian entrants, but also for the Australian communities that welcome them—supporting stronger social cohesion, economic participation, and mutual prosperity.

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase the Humanitarian Program intake

Commit to a phased increase of the annual intake to 27,000 places, in line with the Labour Party's National Platform, balancing protracted and emerging crises.

Recommendation 2: Maintain a balanced program composition

Retain a majority allocation to the Refugee category, while ensuring a strong SHP component to facilitate family reunion and improve settlement outcomes.

Recommendation 3: Establish a structured emergency allocation

Introduce a flexible emergency allocation within the Humanitarian Program to respond to new crises without displacing places for protracted caseloads, with scope for one-off increases in years of significant global displacement.

Recommendation 4: Ensure consistency and equity in crisis responses

Adopt a baseline support package for all humanitarian entrants arriving through emergency pathways, including work and study rights, access to Medicare, and essential settlement services, to promote equity and social cohesion.

Recommendation 5: Increase CSP allocation and improve transparency

Increase the annual CSP allocation to at least 2,500 places, alongside regular public reporting on application pipeline numbers and equitable allocation management.

Recommendation 6: Establish a dedicated family reunion stream

Introduce a separate, affordable family reunion program outside of CSP and SHP to reduce pressure on the Humanitarian Program and support positive settlement outcomes.

Recommendation 7: Establish a structured emergency humanitarian response framework

Create a national framework for emergency humanitarian responses, including clear triggers, consistent visa settings, and coordinated planning across portfolios to ensure equitable, timely, and effective responses.

Recommendation 8: Fund diaspora and community-led crisis support

Provide dedicated funding for diaspora-led initiatives and additional resources for settlement providers to deliver intensive engagement and support during emergency humanitarian responses.

Recommendation 9: Additionality of complementary pathways

All complementary pathways – specifically the Community Sponsorship Program (CSP) and the Community Refugee and Integration Pilot (CRISP) should be made additional to the humanitarian intake as soon as practicably possible.

Recommendation 10: Permanency and reforms of the Skilled Refugee Pilot

The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot, which is set to conclude in June 2025, should be continued and expanded as a permanent complementary pathway for skilled refugees to come to Australia. As part of making the program permanent, the visa fees should be substantially reduced, or redirected into supporting the program. It should also include a pathway for onshore applications.

Recommendation 11: Consistency of settlement support across arrival pathways

Settlement support should be available to all migrants and refugees who arrive in Australia regardless of their mode of arrival.

Recommendation 12: Adopt an intersectional and gender-responsive approach

Embed intersectionality and gender responsiveness across the Humanitarian Program, ensuring equitable access, targeted support for marginalised groups, and dedicated investment in women-led and grassroots organisations.

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