



2026-27 Humanitarian Program: Community Consultation Summary

As part of establishing the composition of Australia's Humanitarian Program each year, the Australian Government may seek public views on humanitarian and resettlement needs, including through the Department of Home Affairs ('the Department') publishing a [Discussion Paper](#), and community consultations with a portfolio Minister. This year, the Department received over 70 written submissions from stakeholders in response to the discussion paper.

This document brings together key insights from written submissions and consultation meetings, combining stakeholder feedback, thematic analysis and recommendations to support future policy development.

Key themes

Protection-first

Stakeholders generally supported maintaining a protection-needs basis for the Humanitarian Program, with priority given to UNHCR-referred refugees. Many submissions proposed allocating a larger share of places to the Refugee Stream, while retaining a strong Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) allocation to support family reunion and community sponsorship.

Family reunion is critical

Immediate and close family links were widely regarded as essential for both reunion and settlement success. Many submissions called for broader family definitions to recognise culturally diverse family obligations and the realities of displacement. Stakeholders also raised the accessibility of Family stream visas for refugees and other displaced people, including as a potential means of managing demand for the SHP.

Early, targeted settlement supports are critical to long-term outcomes

Early, intensive, front-loaded support was frequently described as associated with improved outcomes and longer-term returns. Place-based investment in settlement services was often identified as important to building regional and rural settlement capacity. Some stakeholders indicated that Government-funded supports should continue to operate as a safety net, with community sponsors contributing in partnership.

Increase the Humanitarian Program and make complementary pathways additional

Submissions commonly suggested that the program increase over time, that onshore and offshore components be de-linked, and that complementary pathways be additional to the core intake. Proposed increases varied: some supported maintaining a 20,000 baseline, while others suggested gradual increases to 27,000 and beyond.

The Community Support Program needs change

Many submissions agreed that the current CSP is not working as intended. Stakeholders called for clearer purpose, stronger regulation and transparency of Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs), and a revised focus for the CSP stream. Suggestions varied, including a focus on employability, family links and vulnerability - or a combination of the three.

Stakeholder responses to the 2026-27 Discussion Paper questions

- 1. What should the composition of Australia's 2026-27 Humanitarian Program be and why? There are 20,000 places for both onshore and offshore components of the 2026-27 Humanitarian Program and very high demand under all streams. What should be the proportion split between the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (including Community Support Program) streams in the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program?**

Submissions supported a Humanitarian Program which remains anchored in protection need, with UNHCR-referred refugees forming the core of the offshore intake. A large majority supported delinking onshore and offshore places. Stakeholders also emphasised that complementary pathways should be additional to the Humanitarian Program quota rather than counted within the cap (20,000 places in 2026-27). While views varied on the composition of the offshore component, a common position prioritised the Refugee stream (UNHCR-referred) and around 25–50% for the SHP (including CSP), reflecting an intent to balance global protection needs with family reunion.

- 2. Who should the Government prioritise within the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)? Should existing priorities change? Should there be changes to who can sponsor an applicant? Should proposers carry greater responsibility for providing settlement support to those they sponsor?**

Many submissions emphasised that family reunion should remain central to the SHP, with immediate and close family links seen as key to settlement success. Stakeholders consistently raised that vulnerability should drive prioritisation, commonly identifying women and girls at risk, children and unaccompanied minors, LGBTQIA+ people, persecuted religious and ethnic minorities, and people in protracted displacement or insecure host countries. Many called for broader definitions of family to better reflect displacement realities, including 'aged-out' adult children, extended or chosen family, and de facto partners.

On sponsorship and settlement support, there were differing views on the level of settlement supports that should be provided by SHP proposers. Many submissions favoured better guidance and training, flexible (tiered) expectations based on capacity, and Government-funded settlement safety nets where proposer support is insufficient. Some suggested stricter criteria for potential SHP proposers.

- 3. Global instability and rising cost of living pressures are resulting in increasing costs to deliver settlement services. How do we ensure that settlement services continue to support the most vulnerable humanitarian entrants in this context of finite resources, without compromising on long-term settlement outcomes?**

Stakeholders valued settlement as a core national infrastructure that should receive continued investment from Government. They noted that rising delivery costs meant funding should be revised, rather than addressed through service reductions. Many emphasised that early, intensive, front-loaded support is cost-effective and associated with stronger long-term outcomes.

Common suggestions included tiered, needs-based settlement models that target intensive services to the most vulnerable, stronger whole-of-systems coordination across housing, health, education, employment, disability and state/local systems, and place-based approaches (particularly to support regional settlement capacity).

4. The Community Support Program (CSP) needs to be reformed. It is heavily oversubscribed, with around 20,000 applicants on hand and an extended wait time of around 8 years, and is no longer delivering its original intent to resettle humanitarian entrants who are job-ready and able to become self-sufficient within 12 months.

- **What should a redesigned CSP look like?**
- **What attributes should new CSP applicants have and why?**
- **What kind of delivery model should a new CSP have?**

Submissions highlighted that the CSP is not working as intended, pointing to the backlog (around 20,000 applications and waits of around 8 years), high costs, and reliance on private intermediaries with variable settlement support offerings. There were suggestions that a redesigned CSP should reduce financial barriers (for example, through lower or regulated fees, waivers or payment plans), have a clear purpose with an intake capped to processing capacity, strengthen regulation and transparency of APO arrangements and better manage settlement support needs.

Views differed on which applicants a redesigned CSP should prioritise. Some favoured a protection-centred approach that puts less weight on age, English and job-readiness thresholds, treats employability as one factor among many, and prioritises vulnerability and family/community support. Others supported retaining functional English and job-readiness expectations, clearer labour-market pathways, and shorter processing timeframes. On delivery, submissions converged on shared-responsibility models (government, community sponsors and settlement providers), drew on learnings from Canada's Sponsorship Agreement Holder approach, and called for further co-design with refugee-led and community organisations.

5. Are there other reforms you would suggest to program eligibility or prioritisation, or to the onshore protection and/or offshore program more broadly?

Stakeholders proposed a range of reforms to strengthen Australia's Humanitarian Program and improve fairness, responsiveness and delivery.

Common suggestions included establishing a humanitarian emergency response framework; continued investment in existing complementary pathways such as the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot and the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway Pilot; and improving transparency across all streams within the Humanitarian Program.

Many submissions supported expanding and making more affordable family reunion pathways outside the SHP (for example, through special considerations in the family migration stream for humanitarian and refugee entrants) to relieve pressure on the SHP and CSP streams of the Humanitarian Program.

Many submissions suggested solutions for asylum seekers onshore, with many suggesting guaranteed work rights, Medicare and broader SRSS access, and support for resolving legacy and transitory cohorts.

Across submissions, stakeholders emphasised cross-cutting priorities including strengthening social cohesion and combatting misinformation in public narratives about refugees and migrants; and continued engagement with refugee-led and diaspora organisations as essential in system design and delivery.

Thank you to those who contributed to the 2026-27 Humanitarian Program consultation process. A range of views were provided on these complex issues, and the Department is considering these views in current and future policy deliberations.