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2025-26 Humanitarian Program: Community Consultation Summary

Each year, as part of establishing the composition of Australia's Humanitarian Program, the Australian Government seeks public views on humanitarian and resettlement needs. This process involves the Department publishing a [discussion paper](#) and hosting a number of community consultation meetings with the portfolio Minister. This year, the Department received over 160 written submissions from stakeholders in response to the discussion paper.

This document consolidates key insights from the submissions and integrates stakeholder feedback, thematic analysis, and recommendations to inform future policy development.

Key themes

Increase in Humanitarian Program Intake

Stakeholders expressed widespread support for expanding the program beyond the current 20,000 places. Many stakeholders advocated for 27,000 places, with many supporting for a staged increase with complementary pathways as additional (e.g. Community Support Program (CSP), the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Program, skilled refugee and student refugee visas). Stakeholders also called for emergency reserve allocations to respond to future or protracted crises like Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

To support an increased Program intake, stakeholders emphasised the importance of sustainability and planning in infrastructure in settlement locations. Some stakeholders also suggested to reframe the humanitarian intake as an investment of Government for future, not just a cost.

Processing Delays and Transparency

Stakeholders raised significant concern over long wait times, especially under the CSP and Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). Recommendations included clearer timelines and communication, online application tracking, tiered priority processing, and increased staffing and digital innovation.

Family Reunification

Stakeholders advocated for dedicated family reunification streams outside CSP/SHP, with emphasis on reducing costs and documentation burdens, expanding definitions of 'family', and fast-tracking cases involving children, elderly, and separated families. Stakeholders stated delayed family reunification inhibits good settlement outcomes.

Equity and Inclusion for Vulnerable Groups

Stakeholders advocated to prioritise of religious minorities (e.g. Bahá'ís, Yazidis, Christians, Druze), LGBTQIA+ individuals, stateless persons, women at risk, and people with disabilities; and called for dedicated allocations (e.g. 3 to 10 per cent for LGBTQIA+), trauma-informed services, culturally safe settlement, and inclusive sponsorship models.

Program Composition and Complementary Pathways

Throughout the consultation process, stakeholders expressed mixed views on ideal composition. Some stakeholders suggested reducing allocation of UNHCR referrals due to concerns about the lack of access to UNHCR services in some countries.

- Broader themes stakeholders supported include community-led sponsorship, diaspora engagement, and skilled migration pathways.

Stakeholder responses to the 2025-26 discussion paper questions

1. What should the composition of Australia's 2025-26 Humanitarian Program be and why? What do you think should be the proportion split between the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (which also includes the Community Support Program) categories in the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program?

There was strong support for a balanced or refugee-majority composition. The Department's international organisation partners, UNHCR and IOM, emphasised the importance of Australia's global leadership and urged continued commitment to resettlement.

2. The Humanitarian Program is under significant pressure from unprecedented demand including as a result of multiple refugee crises across the world and limited global resettlement places. How should the Humanitarian Program respond to these crises while balancing the commitment made for protracted situations, specific cohorts and supporting our region?

The community called for flexibility to respond to emerging crises while maintaining commitments to protracted situations, and expressed strong support for a national emergency protection framework. Recommendations included:

- rapid visa pathways, in particular continue using temporary humanitarian visas (such as subclass 449 and subclass 786 visas) for crisis-affected groups;
- coordination across government departments and NGOs; and
- funding and pathway for community-led emergency responses.

3. Due to an increase of interest in the Community Support Program and limited places under the Humanitarian Program, the Community Support Program is oversubscribed with processing times increasing from 6-12 months in 2022-23 to a minimum of 8 years as at June 2025. We understand the Humanitarian Program, while focussed on working age primary applicants, is currently being primarily used for family reunion. What can we do to address this?

Stakeholders expressed overwhelming concern about CSP delays, lack of transparency and accessibility. Recommendations included:

- increasing CSP places;
- making CSP additional to the humanitarian program intake;
- reforming Approved Proposing Organisation eligibility and capping submissions;
- publishing quarterly statistics to improve processing transparency; and
- supporting, and prioritising vulnerable and family-linked applicants.

4. How can the Government better plan and coordinate responses to emergency humanitarian crises? How can private or community supported initiatives assist people displaced by emergency humanitarian crises?

Stakeholders emphasised whole-of-government coordination and the urgent need for a national emergency response framework to ensure consistency across crises. They supported diaspora-led initiatives, regional partnerships, and community sponsorship; and called for transparent communication, funding for settlement services, and inclusive planning, in addition to:

- leveraging community organisations and volunteers for emergency response;
- waiving documentation requirements for persecuted groups and expand legal assistance; and

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- adopting route-based approaches, and coordination with trusted partners.