

27 January 2021

Honourable Treasurer,

Links & Consolidation Network (LinCoN), is a welfare organisation which specifically focuses on the plight of refugees. We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Treasury towards the 2021-22 federal budget. We wish to highlight the efficacy of the Community Support Program (CSP) for refugees under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program as an area of serious consideration in planning the Federal Budget Expenditure.

Enclosed here is our submission detailing our recommendations on how the current program for private refugee sponsorship can be improved for the benefit of both Australia and people seeking refuge from oppression. This cohort of people live in inhumane conditions through no fault of their own yet persevere to find safety.

Australia is a fertile ground for refugees to establish safe and self-sufficient livelihoods. They also represent the potential to facilitate the expansion of the Australian economy. As an example, we liaised with the Northern Territory Farmer's Association. They have expressed that they face a tight labour market whilst increasing agricultural production to \$600M by 2025 and \$1B by 2030. This is exacerbated by the effect of COVID-19 on the international portion of the workforce. The NT Farmer's association welcomed the idea of considering refugees for employment, to facilitate the workforce towards reaching Australia's national agriculture target of \$100B.

In communication with churches within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, we see that there is many Australians eager to welcome more refugees to their communities and to volunteer their time and skills to support them. To enable all this, the government's private sponsorship program (CSP) needs to encourage widespread community participation. This in turn furthers greater integration of refugees in Australian society.

Our two key concerns are the program's prohibitive cost and the fact that 1000 visas currently available under the program are deducted from the immigrants' intake annual quota. We urge that the Government uses the 2021-22 Budget to reform and expand the current Community Support Program, including reducing the cost of sponsorship and ensuring that places are above and beyond any existing humanitarian quota. Starting at 1000 places, the program should allow the community sponsorship of 10,000 refugees annually. The Canadian Refugee Immigration Program has stood the test of time and is a worthwhile model to emulate.

As a wealthy country with a long-standing tradition of resettling refugees, Australia can and must do more to address the global crisis facing refugees. Increasing the intake in the 2021-22 Budget will benefit not only refugees but also Australia's economy and society. Directing new immigrants to areas in need of more new hands is a laudable policy of the government. This cohort brings a wide range of skills, experiences and qualifications to the job market. They will contribute to the Government's Economic Recovery Plan as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A full submission for the review of the Australian CSP has been attached as a supplementary document. This submission contains input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. If there is need for further information or clarification, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely

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