



40  
years



Refugee Council  
of Australia

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## Major party voters support family reunion for refugees, new poll shows

The vast majority of Australians (including more than three-quarters of voters for both major parties) support the reunion of refugee families separated around the world according to a new poll published today.

A ReachTEL survey of 1,958 people, commissioned by Jesuit Social Services and the Refugee Council of Australia, found that 75 per cent of overall respondents answered 'yes' or 'yes – but only after appropriate background checks' when asked whether refugee families separated across the world should be reunited.

“These results show us that the overwhelming majority of the Australian public believe that refugees living in the community should have greater access to family reunion,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“Australians understand the importance of family. And the majority of Australians - regardless of their political preferences - acknowledge that refugee families deserve the opportunity to be kept together in a healthy and harmonious way to allow them the best opportunity to thrive in our communities.”

Refugee Council of Australia CEO Paul Power says both major parties should commit to allocating at least 5,000 visas under the family stream of the Migration Program for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

“Families are better together and now is the time for political leadership to respect the community’s clear opinion by making family reunion a reality,” he says.

Under current policies, the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) is the primary avenue for people from refugee background who have had their claim for refugee status confirmed to attempt to reunite with family members. However, a report released by the Refugee Council of Australia in 2016 found that demand for SHP visas outstrips the number of available places by 7:1 and that many claims were subject to prolonged waiting periods and sourcing evidence to substantiate family relationships could pose a barrier.

Mr Power says that the psychological, financial and social impacts of family separation have a significantly detrimental effect on people trying to achieve positive settlement outcomes.

“Ninety seven per cent of respondents to the survey agreed that family is important to them – unfortunately many refugees living in the Australian community have no idea if or when they will see their families again and they fear for their safety. Without more humane policies in place, people will continue to suffer.”

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## Survey results

- ReachTEL conducted a survey of 1,958 residents across Australia on August 29, 2017
- 90.4 per cent of respondents said family is 'very important' to them, 6.3 per cent said 'somewhat important,' 3.3 per cent said 'not important at all'
- 86.8 per cent of respondents said it is 'very important' for family members to support one another, 11.2 per cent said 'somewhat important,' two per cent said 'not important at all'
- 65.6 per cent of respondents 'strongly agree' that no parent should be separated from their children unnecessarily, 21.1 per cent 'agree,' 3.9 per cent 'disagree,' 1.4 per cent 'strongly disagree,' 3.9 per cent 'undecided,' 4.1 per cent 'not sure.'