



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Discussion Paper

Australia's

Humanitarian

Program 2018–19

Introduction

The Australian public is invited to provide their views on the management and composition of the Humanitarian Program (the Program) for 2018–19.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of engaging with the community to ensure continued support for the Program, and each year seeks the views of the Australian public on the Program.

The Government also consults with:

- state and territory governments and Commonwealth agencies and
- peak refugee and humanitarian organisations.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provides a submission to the Government on global resettlement needs for the program year.

Australia's capacity to facilitate the successful entry and settlement of humanitarian entrants into our society is also considered in planning the Program. The Government seeks expert advice to manage risks to the Australian community.

This paper provides background information to inform written submissions. It includes an overview of the international context in which the Program operates and information on its key features.

If you would like to make a written submission on Australia's 2018–19 Humanitarian Program, please email it to: humanitarian.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au

All submissions should be received by 25 May 2018. Submissions received after this deadline may not be considered.

The Humanitarian Program

The Humanitarian Program comprises the offshore resettlement (for people outside Australia) and onshore protection (for people inside Australia) components. The Program aims to:

- provide permanent resettlement to those most in need, who are in desperate situations overseas, including in refugee camps and protracted refugee situations
- reunite refugees and people who are in refugee-like situations overseas with their family in Australia
- be flexible and responsive to changing global resettlement needs and emerging humanitarian situations to ensure Australia's approach remains comprehensive and high-quality
- use resettlement strategically to help stabilise refugee populations, reduce the prospect of irregular movement from source countries and countries of first asylum, and support broader international protection
- meet Australia's international protection obligations.

Each year the Government sets the number of visas that may be granted under the Program. In recent years, the Australian Government provided an additional 12,000 Humanitarian Program places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

The 2017-18 Program has 16,250 places (including up to 1,000 places for the new Community Support Program). The Program will increase to 18,750 places in 2018-19.

All offshore Humanitarian Program applications are assessed on an individual basis with applicants required to demonstrate their humanitarian need. All people granted a visa are subject to rigorous assessment, including health, character and security checks. People who are considered to represent a danger to an Australian citizen or to an Australian community, would not meet these requirements regardless of race or religion. These checks are conducted before individuals are granted a visa to enter Australia and are not compromised to meet program numbers.

A summary of outcomes of the 2016–17 Humanitarian Program is at **Attachment A**. For more information see the Department's fact sheet [Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program](#).

International context

Recent levels of global displacement have been unprecedented. In June 2017, an estimated 65.6 million were forcibly displaced worldwide as the result of conflict and persecution; of this group approximately 22.5 million were refugees. The United Nations estimates that 1.2 million refugees are in need of resettlement.

The Australian Government recognises the complexity of refugee issues and the need to work with the Australian community and international partners to find solutions to the plight of refugees and displaced people.

Australia has a long history of working with international partners and other governments to ensure comprehensive solutions to resolve forced displacement situations.

Australia is currently actively participating in negotiations for two Global Compacts – one on Refugees and the other on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compacts provide an opportunity to build international consensus for practical action to address global displacement, promote well-managed migration, and strengthen international cooperation and responsibility sharing in relation to refugees in a systematic and sustainable way.

Australia's role as a resettlement country

Australia is one of only a small number of countries that operate an annual permanent resettlement program, and consistently ranks among the top three permanent resettlement countries, along with Canada and the United States, which have traditionally offered around 80 per cent of the world's resettlement places each year.

Over the years, the Humanitarian Program intake has been drawn from a range of nationalities, ethnic and religious groups, reflecting global displacement arising from conflict and persecution. A short history of the Program is at **Attachment B**.

Offshore component

The offshore component of the Program has two categories:

- Refugee category and
- Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) category.

Refugee Category

The Refugee category assists people who are subject to persecution in their home country and for whom resettlement in Australia is the best durable solution. Australia works closely with UNHCR, which refers many of the successful applicants for resettlement in Australia under this category.

The Refugee category has four subclasses:

- Refugee visa (subclass 200) – for people who have fled persecution and are living outside their home country
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201) – only a small number of visas are granted under this subclass for people living in their home country who are subject to persecution. This visa is used for example, for Afghan Locally Engaged Employees (and their dependents) at risk of harm due to their connection to the Australian Government mission in Afghanistan
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203) – only a small number of visas are granted under this subclass for people outside their home country who are in urgent need of protection because there is an imminent threat to their life and security
- Woman at Risk visa (subclass 204) – for women and their dependents subject to persecution in their home country or registered as being 'of concern' to UNHCR and without the protection of a male relative.

SHP Category

The SHP category (subclass 202) is for people outside their home country, subject to substantial discrimination amounting to a gross violation of human rights and with family or community ties to Australia.

Applications for SHP visas must be accompanied by a proposal from an eligible Australian citizen or permanent resident, an eligible New Zealand citizen, or an organisation operating in Australia. If the SHP application is successful, proposers help the applicant pay for their travel to Australia and assist with their accommodation and initial orientation in Australia.



The limited number of SHP places available and the high demand for places mean that not everyone is accepted. Priority is generally given to applicants with proposers residing in a regional area and to applicants who have close family members in Australia.

Community Support Program (CSP)

A framework for the CSP was established on 1 July 2017 with up to 1,000 places allocated within the Offshore Humanitarian Program. It replaces the Community Proposal Pilot which commenced on 1 June 2013. Any unused CSP places will be absorbed through the SHP.

The CSP is designed to provide a sustainable model of private sponsorship for refugees and it enables communities and businesses, as well as families and individuals, to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and support new humanitarian arrivals. It is intended to harness community support for refugees, including the willingness of the Australian business community to support refugees in practical ways through employment and financial assistance.

Priority will be given to refugees with good settlement prospects who are between 18 and 50 years of age who have an offer of employment or personal attributes that would enable them to become financially self-sufficient within 12 months of arrival.

For more information on the CSP see the Department's website [Community Support Program](#).

Onshore component of the Humanitarian Program

Since September 2013, the onshore component of the Program has been reserved for people who arrive lawfully in Australia and are found to engage Australia's protection obligations because they are either found to be a refugee, or meet the complementary protection criteria and are granted a Permanent Protection visa pursuant to the *Migration Act 1958*.

Permanent Protection visa applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis, with reference to detailed and current information on conditions in the applicant's country of nationality, or country of former habitual residence if they do not have a nationality.

The complementary protection assessment takes into account Australia's obligations under other human rights treaties to which Australia is a party, namely the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (CAT). An applicant must also satisfy health, character and security criteria in order to be granted a Permanent Protection visa.

Settlement assistance to Humanitarian Program entrants

The Australian Government works to improve the lifetime wellbeing of migrants and refugees settling in Australia by responding to their specific needs, encouraging their independence and participation in the Australian community. Settlement services are delivered through the Department of Social Services (DSS) and provide early, tailored and intensive support to refugees and humanitarian entrants in the first five years of their arrival in Australia.

For more information on settlement services see the [DSS](#) website.

ATTACHMENT A

Outcomes of the 2016–17 Humanitarian Program

In 2016–17, a total of 21,968* visas were granted under the Program. This included 1711 grants under the onshore component and 20,257* grants under the offshore component. In the offshore component, 9653* (48 per cent) were Refugee visas and 10,604* (52 per cent) were SHP visas.

In addition to the delivery of the 2016-17 annual program which was set at 13,750 places, the Department delivered the 8208 remaining visas announced as part of the commitment made by the Government to provide an additional 12,000 places in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. All 12,000 additional humanitarian visas were granted between November 2015 and 21 March 2017.

In 2016–17, the Government continued its commitment to resettling highly vulnerable women by setting aside at least 1200 places within the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program for vulnerable women and their families. A total of 1607 visas were granted to vulnerable women and their families during that period.

In 2016–17, 668 Yazidis from Syria and Iraq, living in Turkey and Iraq, were granted offshore humanitarian visas. Many people from this vulnerable group have high levels of trauma, with a number having experienced abuse and sexual slavery. The Government continues to facilitate their successful settlement in Australia by providing appropriate and targeted settlement services.

In 2016-17, 898 people applied through the Community Proposal Pilot, with 608 people granted visas as at 30 June 2017. The Pilot transitioned to the Community Support Program (CSP) on 01 July 2017.

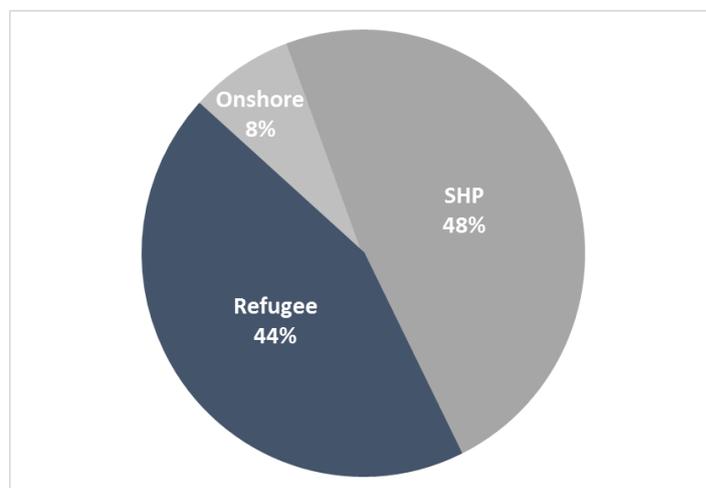


Table 1 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component and category 2016–17

Component	Visa category	Visa grants
Offshore	Refugee	9,653*
	SHP	10,604*
	Sub-total	20,257
Onshore	Protection (permanent)	1,711
	Sub-total	1,711
Total Program grants 2016–17		21,968*

* These figures include visas granted towards the annual offshore resettlement component of the Humanitarian Program, and the additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

Table 2 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component 2013–14 to 2015-16

Category	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Refugee	6,484	5,985	8,267	9,653
SHP	4,500	4,996	7,270	10,604
Onshore	2,752	2,750	2,003	1,711
Total	13,736	13,731	17,540	21,968

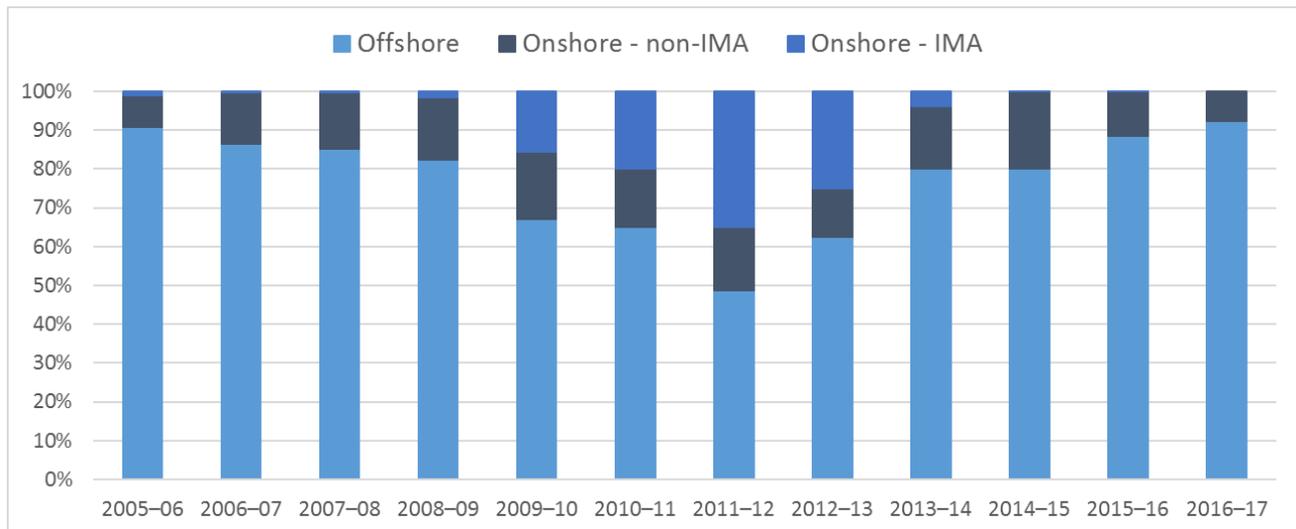
Notes

1. Offshore statistics for 2015-16 and 2016-17 include visas granted towards the annual Humanitarian Program and the additional 12,000 places for Syrians and Iraqis.
2. Data in this table is revised as at the end of the 2016-17 program year, and may differ from previously published figures.
3. Note the Onshore category only includes people who arrived in Australia lawfully.

Onshore/offshore balance within the Program

Since September 2013, the onshore component of the Humanitarian Program has been reserved for people who arrive lawfully. Temporary Protection visas granted to people who arrive as Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) in Australia are not included within the Humanitarian Program.

Figure 1 – Onshore/offshore balance within the program 2005–06 to 2016-17



A Flexible Program

The Program operates flexibly to respond effectively to evolving humanitarian situations and global resettlement needs. The table and figures below illustrate the shifting composition of the Program over past years. Throughout this period the priority regions for Australia have been the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Table 3 – Top nationalities within the offshore component 2012–13 to 2016–17

Rank	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
1	Afghanistan	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq
2	Iraq	Syria	Syria	Syria
3	Myanmar	Myanmar	Myanmar	Afghanistan
4	Syria	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Myanmar
5	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)	Bhutan
6	Iran	Eritrea	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)
7	Congo (DRC)	Bhutan	Somalia	Eritrea
8	Eritrea	Iran	Iran	Ethiopia
9	Somalia	Somalia	Ethiopia	South Sudan
10	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Somalia

Notes:

1. Visas counted include subclass 200 (Refugee), 201 (In-country Special Humanitarian Program), 202 (Global Special Humanitarian Program), 203 (Emergency Rescue) and 204 (Woman at Risk).
2. The country of birth of principal visa applicants is applied to secondary visa applicants.
3. The 2015–16 and 2016–17 figures in this table includes visas granted towards the annual offshore resettlement component of the Humanitarian Program, and the additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.
4. Congo (DRC) refers to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Community Protection

All entrants under the Humanitarian Program must satisfy stringent character and security requirements. Settlement services facilitate their independence and participation in the Australian community.

History of refugee resettlement in Australia

Australia has been resettling refugees for over a hundred years. Prior to World War II, groups included:

- in the 19th century, Lutherans, Hungarians, Italians and Poles came to Australia to escape persecution
- during the early 20th century, small numbers of Russian, Greek, Armenian, Assyrian and Jewish refugees resettled in Australia
- between 1933 and 1939, more than 7000 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany were resettled in Australia.

Short History of the Humanitarian Program

Resettlement programs in Australia began in 1947, with the resettlement of people displaced by World War II. Since their inception, the size and focus of the resettlement program has responded to evolving humanitarian situations and changes to the global need for resettlement.

They include:

- 1947-1954 – 170,000 Eastern Europeans displaced during World War II
- mid 1950s-late 1960s – thousands of refugees from crises in Europe, including the Hungarian uprising and the Warsaw Pact military intervention in Czechoslovakia
- early 1970s – more than 16,000 people from Central and South America following political turmoil in their countries
- 1975 – around 18,000 Lebanese displaced by civil war
- 1975-1996 – 150,000 Indochinese (Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese) refugees sparked by the end of the Vietnam War
- this included over 19,000 Indochinese refugees resettled under the Comprehensive Plan of Action, (1986-1996), for Indochinese remaining in camps in South East Asia, with Australia one of four significant resettlement countries
- 1980s – global focus – up to 40 nationalities
- 1990s – focus on Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia
- 2000s and 2010s – focus on Middle East, Asia and Africa.

1981

The Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) was introduced for people who, while not identified as refugees, were living outside their home country and were subject to substantial discrimination amounting to a gross violation of human rights in their home country and had family or community ties to Australia.

Mid-1980s

The Program had a global focus and included up to 40 nationalities, including people from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East and Asia. Priority was given to applicants who had family or other close links to Australia.

Late 1980s

The Woman at Risk and Emergency Rescue visa programs were introduced.

1991

The Special Assistance Category (SAC) was introduced for groups of people with close links to Australia who were in vulnerable situations but whose circumstances did not fit into the traditional humanitarian resettlement criteria. SACs were introduced for groups such as Soviet minorities, East Timorese, citizens of former Yugoslavia, Burmese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Sri Lankans and Sudanese.

1993

In 1993, the Government separated the Humanitarian Program from the Migration Program to provide a better balance between Australia's international humanitarian objectives and the domestic, social and economic goals of the Migration Program.

Late 1990s and early 2000s

Between 1998 and 2001, Europe was the largest source region for the Program with around half of all those resettled coming from the former Yugoslavia.

The proportion of resettlement from Africa increased from around 16 per cent in 1998 to a peak of 70 per cent between 2003 and 2005.

Other key source regions during this time included the Middle East and South West Asia.

Recent Years

The Middle East and South West Asia have remained a focus of the Program in recent years due to the displacement of significant numbers of people from this region as the result of ongoing conflicts, primarily in Afghanistan and Iraq, and more recently in Syria. Between July 2015 and March 2017, 11,464 Iraqis and 10,329 Syrians were resettled in Australia as part of a commitment made by Australia to provide an additional 12,000 places in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

The focus on other parts of Asia has also continued, including resettlement from Myanmar and Bhutan, in addition to significant numbers from Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia.