



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Discussion Paper

Australia's Humanitarian Program 2024-25

Introduction

The Government recognises the importance of engaging with the community to ensure continued support for Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program (the Program) and to provide greater transparency to the public. The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) publishes a Discussion Paper each year to inform the public and seek their views on the management and composition of the Program, including options for diversifying the offshore resettlement component and strengthening Humanitarian Program outcomes.

As part of the consultation process, the Government consults with a broad range of stakeholders including:

- state and territory governments and Commonwealth agencies;
- peak refugee and humanitarian organisations; and
- the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The 2023 consultation process informed the composition and policy settings for the 2023-24 Program. The Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP, hosted three consultation meetings in May and June 2023, and the Department received over 40 written submissions in response to the [Humanitarian Program 2023-24 Discussion Paper](#). [The 2023-24 consultation summary](#) has been published on the Department's website.

This paper provides background information to **inform written submissions for the 2024-25 Humanitarian Program**. It includes an overview of the Program and information on its key features.

Planning for the management and composition of the 2024-25 Program will consider Australia's capacity to facilitate the successful entry and settlement of humanitarian entrants into our society, and expert advice to manage any impact to the Australian community.

When providing your submission, you are invited to give particular consideration to consider the following questions:

1. What is the ideal composition of Australia's 2024-25 Humanitarian Program and why? What do you think should be the proportion split between the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program categories in the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program?
2. The Humanitarian Program continues to face significant pressure, with demand greatly exceeding available places. While priority is given to cohorts who are outside their home country and have the greatest resettlement need, are there other measures the government could take to increase transparency and avoid giving false hope (for example, through changes to application processes)?
3. How can the Humanitarian Program better respond to future resettlement crises?
4. Scalable complementary pathways for humanitarian entrants require significant financial and in-kind contributions from the private and community sectors. How can the Australian Government best incentivise these contributions and provide the enabling environment for complementary pathways to grow?
5. How can Australia best support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants to make strong contributions to Australia's economic prosperity?

If you would like to make a written submission on Australia's 2024-25 program, please email humanitarian.consultation@homeaffairs.gov.au. Submissions close at **5pm on Friday 7 June 2024**.

Australia's role as a resettlement country

This Government is committed to generous and flexible Humanitarian and Settlement Programs that meet Australia's international protection obligations, and position Australia as a global leader in international resettlement efforts. The Program demonstrates Australia's commitment to global resettlement efforts while providing ongoing economic and social benefits to Australia. It highlights the ways in which humanitarian entrants can enrich Australian society and boost the economy with their skills, talent and diverse cultural vibrancy.

Australia's settlement services for refugee and humanitarian entrants are internationally recognised for their expertise and breadth of support. Australia stands ready to support other countries to establish and grow their refugee resettlement programs, particularly on how to successfully settle refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Today Australia continues to contribute to responsibility sharing, growing meaningful refugee participation, and championing complementary pathways such as community sponsorship, labour mobility and family reunion opportunities, including through:

- Chairing the 2024 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (formerly known as the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement), the most important multilateral forum for UNHCR, States, private sector, academia, NGOs and refugees to discuss and advance global resettlement issues;
- Significant [pledges](#) put forward to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva on 13-15 December 2023;
- Core membership of the US Resettlement Diplomacy Network (RDN); and
- Founding membership and incoming Chair (from April 2024) of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility (GTF).

Building on existing commitments from the inaugural GRF in 2019 to enhance refugee participation, the Government has established a Refugee Advisory Panel, the first of its kind in Australia.

The establishment of the Panel builds on Australia's proud tradition of championing meaningful refugee participation, and recognises the importance of lived experience in shaping national and international dialogue and policy around refugees.

Global Refugee Forum 2023 – Australian commitments

The 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) was held from 13-15 December against a deepening global displacement crisis, with more than 114 million people displaced across the globe. At the GRF, Australia reaffirmed its commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees, including its support for refugees and host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, and expanding access to third country solutions through resettlement and complementary pathway places.

Australia pledged over \$250 million to support refugees and to sustain humanitarian assistance in protracted crises, including:

- \$235 million for Myanmar and Bangladesh (supporting displaced Rohingya and communities in need)
- \$20 million to support people in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries
- \$10 million to support people in Sudan and those displaced to neighbouring countries.

Australia committed to not only growing our own refugee resettlement and complementary pathways, but to supporting other States to establish and grow their own.

- In addition to increasing Australia's Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places, the highest core intake in over a decade, we pledged to grow skills-based pathways.
- We pledged to work with a range of non-government organisations to gradually increase community sponsored and other complementary places to 10,000 per year, in addition to the core humanitarian intake.
- We are also championing machine-readable refugee travel documents and will invest in training initiatives that build skills sought after in the global labour market.

Other pledges made by Australia at the GRF will support access to legal services, use of alternatives to immigration detention, and foster mental health and psychosocial well-being of refugees.

The Humanitarian Program

The Humanitarian Program (the Program) has a long history of providing resettlement for refugees and others who are displaced as a result of conflict, persecution and human rights abuses. The Program's intake is drawn from a range of nationalities, ethnic and religious groups, reflecting global displacement arising from conflict and persecution. It operates flexibly to respond effectively to evolving humanitarian emergencies, such as Afghanistan, and global resettlement needs. The principles guiding the Program are that:

- we prioritise those caseloads most in need of global resettlement in line with guidance and referrals from UNHCR;
- we are global and non-discriminatory; and
- we target vulnerable cohorts within refugee populations.

To ensure Australia continues to play its part, the Government will work closely with both the international and domestic community, particularly the UNHCR, as we deliver Australia's humanitarian intake. Consistent with the approach adopted by the UNHCR, Australia will prioritise those cohorts who have the greatest resettlement need. This will focus on people who are outside their home country and are:

- assessed as refugees by the UNHCR and referred to Australia for resettlement;
- applicants proposed by a close family member in Australia; and
- vulnerable cohorts within refugee populations, including women and children, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ and other identified minority groups with family links in Australia.

All Program applications are assessed on an individual basis, with applicants required to demonstrate their humanitarian need. Visa grants are subject to rigorous assessment, including health, character and security checks, which are conducted before individuals are granted a visa.

There are two components within the Program: the offshore component, focussing on providing permanent resettlement in Australia to refugees and people in humanitarian need outside their home country (and outside Australia); and the onshore component which is reserved for people who arrive in Australia lawfully, seek Australia's protection and are found to engage Australia's *non-refoulement* (non-return) obligations.

Offshore Component

The offshore component of the Humanitarian Program has three parts:

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

- Community Support Program (CSP).

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 the 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) – generally for people who have fled persecution and are living outside their home country.
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201) – this visa is used in very limited circumstances, as the UNHCR is not mandated to refer people for resettlement who remain in their home country, even if the UNHCR has a presence in that country. Australia is also unable to progress visa applications for people who are in their home country where there is a volatile security situation and/or where Australia has no official presence.
- 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. Applications are usually only granted to those referred by the UNHCR for consideration.
- 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 the UNHCR and without the protection of a male relative.

Special Humanitarian Program (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 must pay for the applicants’ travel to Australia and provide initial accommodation and orientation in Australia.

The limited number of SHP places available and the high demand for places mean that not everyone is accepted. Priority is given to applicants outside their home country who have close family members in Australia.

Community Support Program (CSP)

The CSP is designed to provide a model of private sponsorship for refugees that complements existing Refugee and SHP categories. It enables communities and businesses, as well as families and individuals, to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and to support new humanitarian arrivals.

The CSP 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, and increase the chances of strong integration and settlement outcomes.

Like other streams under the offshore Humanitarian Program, priority of CSP is given to applicants who fall within the Government’s global, regional and settlement priorities.

Onshore Component

The onshore component of the Humanitarian Program is 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 under the *Migration Act 1958* (the Act).

People found to engage Australia's protection obligations must also satisfy health, character and security requirements for the grant of a Protection visa.

Protection visa applications are individually assessed in accordance with the Act. The relevant provisions in the Act are based upon Australia's interpretation of its *non-refoulement* obligations (obligation not to return) in the *1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol* (the Refugee Convention), the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, and the *1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

On 5 October 2023, the Government announced a \$160 million package of investments in the Protection visa system to ensure it continues to serve its intended purpose: to provide protection to those who are in genuine need and are found meet Australia's protection obligations. This includes funding to significantly reduce the time taken to process a Protection visa, and to boost free legal assistance for prospective applicants.

Snapshot of major humanitarian resettlement groups over time


The 2024-25 Program will maintain our long-term commitment to a generous and flexible program while also taking account of the challenges associated with effectively responding to the global humanitarian crises.

Post World War II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eastern Europe and Central Europe• The Balkans and Baltic states
1960s and 1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Europe• Central and South America• Lebanon
1980s and 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eastern Europe• Latin America• Middle East, Asia and Africa
Recent Arrivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Middle East and Afghanistan• Central Africa• Horn of Africa• Asia

For further statistical information on the Program, see: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/live/humanitarian-program>.

Humanitarian Crisis Response

Australia's visa and resettlement responses to international humanitarian crises are part of coordinated Whole-of-Government efforts and support broader international responses. Each humanitarian crisis is different, and the Government response is based on the circumstances of the crisis, and the relevant needs of people who are impacted.



We are committed to responding flexibly to changing international humanitarian needs, including providing appropriate support for the travel and resettlement of refugees and others requiring Australia's protection.

However, Australia's Humanitarian Program continues to face significant pressure. Demand for places under the Program is unprecedented, following record levels of forced displacement, and is expected to continue due to ongoing global instability. Australia has limited capacity for humanitarian resettlement and cannot resettle all who apply for a Refugee and Humanitarian visa.

Program size

As refugee situations around the world increase in scope, scale and complexity, Australia is committed to finding sustainable global solutions, including through growing our overall Program.

Australia's 2022-23 Humanitarian Program was delivered in full, with 15,875 visas granted in the Offshore program (including the 4,125 additional places allocated to Afghan nationals) and 2,000 visas granted in the Onshore (Protection visa) program.

- A total of 17,875 Humanitarian visas were granted, marking the first time Australia's Humanitarian Program has been fully delivered since 2018-19.
- 2022-23 also saw the highest number of Community Support Program (CSP) visa grants since the program's inception in 2018.

A total of 20,000 places in Australia's 2023-24 Humanitarian Program is the highest the core Program intake has been since 2012-2013. Program statistics and reporting for the 2023-24 Program will be published on the Department's website when available.

The Government will maintain a program of 20,000 places in 2024-25 to ensure we deliver on our global resettlement commitments, and continue to benefit from the significant contributions of humanitarian entrants, who enrich Australian society and boost the economy with their skills, talent and diverse cultural vibrancy.

Complementary pathways

In line with our commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees and Global Refugee Forum pledges, Australia is piloting ways to provide complementary pathways for refugees and other displaced people.

Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot

Designed and delivered in collaboration with Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB), the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot (the Pilot) is a practical example of how businesses in Australia can harness refugee talent to address skills shortages, while providing complementary pathways for refugees to find safety and stability in Australia.

The Pilot will run until 30 June 2025, with an allocation of 500 primary places (plus the members of each candidate's family unit).

- Since the Pilot started in 2021, as at 10 April 2024, 93 skilled refugees/displaced people have been granted permanent residence in Australia, along with 138 of their family members.

Through concessions to standard skilled visa eligibility requirements, the Pilot significantly reduces barriers faced by skilled refugees and displaced people when trying to access skilled visas.

This provides real opportunities for people to resume their careers and rebuild their lives, while also providing Australian employers and communities highly sought after skills that boost our economy and enrich our society.

The Pilot is a skilled program, meaning that:

- allocated permanent places are drawn from the skilled stream of the Department's permanent Migration Program, not from Australia's Humanitarian Program; and
- sponsoring employers provide settlement support, with input and coordination from TBB. Some Pilot candidates have been also supported by community sponsor groups.

Future complementary pathways

Increasing Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake through complementary pathways will require a whole of society approach that looks beyond traditional approaches, with the community and private sectors playing a greater role, including through funding and in-kind contributions.

Strengthening complementary pathways will be key to supporting future growth in Australia's overall humanitarian intake, including through engaging a range of stakeholders to gradually increase community sponsored and other complementary places to 10,000 per year, in addition to the core humanitarian intake.

Settlement

Australia has a long and proud tradition of resettling migrants and refugees and vulnerable people in humanitarian need. The Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) supports humanitarian entrants integrate into Australian life by building the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the community. These services are delivered in each state and territory by contracted service providers on a fee-for-service basis.

HSP clients receive a package of support tailored to their individual needs, strengths and goals. Support generally includes airport reception, short term accommodation, a package of basic household goods, assistance to find long-term accommodation in the private rental market, access to mainstream and specialist support services, and support to connect with the local community. Clients also participate in an orientation program to develop their understanding of Australian values, laws and systems and acquire the life skills needed for independence.

Humanitarian Integration and Settlement Program (HISP)

The Government is reforming the way settlement services have been delivered over the past few years. The new Humanitarian Integration and Settlement Program (HISP) will build on existing settlement services provided through the HSP but with some enhancements that will provide more flexibility for providers to deliver support to clients, based on the needs, strengths and aspirations of clients, facilitated through a mixed funding model to provide flexibility to service providers to tailor settlement services to their clients' needs.


The HISP was proposed following an extensive consultation process that included feedback from peak settlement organisations, settlement service providers, refugee and humanitarian organisations, and people with lived refugee experience. It also followed a Request for Information (RFI) process in late 2023 that sought feedback from the settlement sector, and other interested parties, on delivery model options and costings for the provision of settlement services for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

The HISP will provide a greater focus on the provision of good settlement outcomes in areas critical to the successful settlement of refugee and humanitarian entrants, as outlined in the [Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework](#) (Framework).

The development of the HISP was informed by the Framework, which was announced on 16 October 2023 by the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP, and builds on the strong foundation of Australia's world-class settlement services.

The Framework will help to:

- improve our settlement services

- 
- enhance positive settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants
 - guide government agencies delivering settlement services from planning through to programs and evaluation.

The Framework comprises eleven interrelated domains and two underpinning principles. These outline a structured approach to good settlement and integration outcomes. Each domain and principle reflects an area critical to successful settlement and integration. Preliminary indicators have been developed to measure progress against the domains outlined in the Framework.

Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)

The Government is also trialling an alternative approach to the settlement of refugees, by providing a formal opportunity for community members to welcome refugees into Australia and directly support their settlement journey and integration into communities. The pilot aims to settle up to 1500 refugees.

The CRISP provides a dedicated settlement pathway for un-linked refugees: those without existing family links in Australia, referred to Australia by the UNHCR.

Refugees arriving through the CRISP are helped to settle by a group of trained community volunteers, rather than government-funded settlement service providers. Supporters provide a range of practical and in-kind settlement and integration support, including help with finding housing, work and learning English.

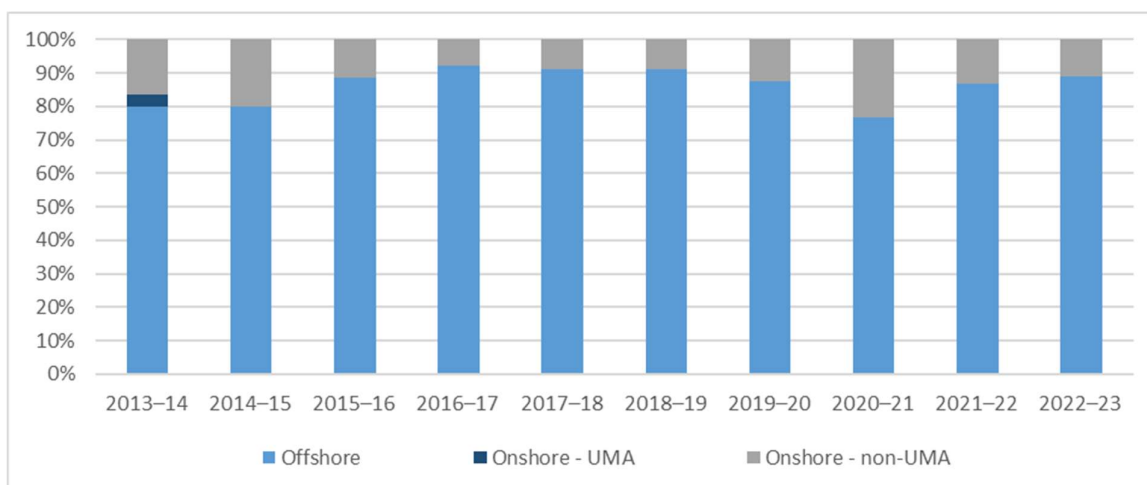
As at 10 April 2024, 408 refugees have been settled under the pilot.

ATTACHMENT A

Onshore/offshore balance within the Humanitarian Program

The Humanitarian Program has two main components: offshore resettlement (for people outside Australia) and onshore protection (for people in Australia). The Program operates to balance the needs of onshore protection seekers, with providing permanent resettlement options to those most in need outside Australia. Prior to September 2013, the onshore component of the Program also included permanent visa grants to those who arrived unlawfully in Australia and are granted a Protection visa. Since that time, the onshore component has been reserved for people who arrive lawfully and Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMAs) or Unauthorised Air Arrivals in Australia are not included within the Program.

Figure 1 – Onshore/offshore (permanent) balance within the program 2013–14 to 2022–23



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 composition of the Program over past years, which has remained relatively stable, reflecting the protracted nature of many conflicts and displacement situations. The Middle East, Asia and Africa have been priority regions throughout this period. The Americas were included as a priority region from 2018–19.

Table 1 – Top nationalities for applicants granted visas within the offshore component 2017–18 to 2022–23

Rank	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
1	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
2	Syria	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)	Myanmar	Iraq	Iraq
3	Myanmar	Myanmar	Syria	Afghanistan	Myanmar	Myanmar
4	Congo (DRC)	Syria	Myanmar	Syria	Syria	Congo (DRC)
5	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Eritrea	Congo (DRC)	Syria
6	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Pakistan	Pakistan	Ethiopia
7	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Iran	Eritrea	Venezuela
8	Bhutan	Iran	CAR	Congo (DRC)	Ethiopia	Iran
9	Iran	Bhutan	Iran	Stateless	CAR	CAR
10	Tibet	Tibet	Stateless	Venezuela	Iran	Pakistan

Notes:

1. Visas counted include subclasses 200 (Refugee), 201 (In-Country Special Humanitarian Program), 202 (Global Special Humanitarian Program), 203 (Emergency Rescue) and 204 (Woman at Risk).
2. Statistics up to 2018–19 are based on country of birth as declared by the applicant. From 2019–20, they are based on citizenship as declared by the applicant. The declared country of birth or citizenship of the principal visa applicants is applied to secondary visa applicants.
3. Congo (DRC) refers to the Democratic Republic of Congo.
4. CAR refers to Central African Republic.

Table 2 – Top nationalities for applicants granted visas within the onshore component (Protection Visa) 2017–18 to 2022–23

Rank	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
1	Iraq	Iran	Türkiye	Iran	Iran	Myanmar
2	Pakistan	Iraq	Iran	Pakistan	China (Exc. SAR)	China (Exc. SAR)
3	Libya	Pakistan	Pakistan	Türkiye	Pakistan	Pakistan
4	Malaysia	Türkiye	Iraq	China (Exc SAR)	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea
5	China (Exc. SAR)	Malaysia	Saudi Arabia	Iraq	Türkiye	Iran
6	Iran	Libya	China (Exc. SAR)	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea	Afghanistan
7	Syria	China (Exc. SAR)	Afghanistan	Yemen	Yemen	Iraq
8	Bangladesh	Syria	Venezuela	Malaysia	Venezuela	Ethiopia
9	Egypt	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea	Venezuela	Ethiopia	Venezuela
10	Ethiopia	India	Yemen	Nigeria	Egypt	Malaysia