



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Discussion Paper

Australia's Humanitarian Program 2019–20

Introduction

The Australian public is invited to provide their views on the management and composition of the Humanitarian Program (the Program) for 2019–20, including options for diversifying the offshore resettlement component of the Humanitarian Program and strengthening Program outcomes.

The 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;
- peak refugee and humanitarian organisations; and
- the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Australia's capacity to facilitate the successful entry and settlement of humanitarian entrants into our society is also considered in planning the Program and the Government seeks expert advice to manage any 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 2019–20 Humanitarian Program, please email it to humanitarian.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au.

All submissions should be received by 18 March 2019. Submissions received after this deadline may not be considered.

The Humanitarian Program

Australia is one of the world's most generous contributors to international refugee resettlement efforts, successfully settling more than 880,000 refugees and others in humanitarian need since the end of the Second World War. The Humanitarian 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 2016-17, the Program included 13,750 places, increasing to 16,250 places in 2017-18 and 18,750 places in 2018-19. In recent years, the Government also provided an additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

All offshore Humanitarian 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. These checks are conducted before individuals are granted a visa to enter Australia.

A summary of outcomes of the 2017–18 Humanitarian Program is at **Attachment A**. The full report is available on the Department's website, at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/australia-offshore-humanitarian-program-2017-18.pdf>.

International context

Recent levels of global displacement have been unprecedented. Not all refugees and displaced people need to be resettled. Resettlement is one of three enduring solutions used to help refugees:

- voluntary return to the country of origin in conditions of safety and dignity;
- local integration in the countries of first asylum and settlement; and
- resettlement if voluntary return or local integration is not feasible.

For 2019, the United Nations estimates that of the estimated 68.5 million forcibly displaced people, close to 1.4 million refugees will be in need of resettlement globally.

Resettlement continues to be an important protection tool, providing protection and solutions for refugees who face specific or urgent protection risks. 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'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.

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**.

Snapshot of major humanitarian groups

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 (Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia)• Asia (Burma/Myanmar, Bhutan)

In 2018-19, the Program includes caseloads from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The Program also includes a small, new caseload from Central and South America as a response to increased displacement in the region, including from Venezuela.

Australia's Humanitarian Program has two main components: offshore resettlement (for people outside Australia) and onshore protection (for people in Australia).

Offshore component

The offshore component of the 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 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

The CSP is designed to provide a sustainable model of private sponsorship for refugees that complements, rather than competes with, the existing Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program categories. It enables communities and businesses, as well as families and individuals, to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and 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.

Priority is 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. Additional priority is given to applicants willing to live and work in regional Australia.

CSP applications have been able to be lodged since March 2018 and up to 1,000 places are available for the CSP from within the 2018-19 Humanitarian Program.

For more information on the CSP see the Department’s website, at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/refugee-and-humanitarian-program/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 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 Permanent Protection visa.

Permanent 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*.

Regional Settlement

Regional settlement aims to realise potential employment and integration benefits for humanitarian entrants, particularly those from rural backgrounds or with employment skills suited to regional areas. It can also contribute to meeting labour and demographic needs in regional Australia, and reduce demand on services and resources in the major capital cities.

The Australian Government actively explores settling humanitarian entrants who have no links to Australia away from the major metropolitan areas. Within the SHP, priority is given to applicants proposed by a relative who genuinely resides in a regional area. Within the CSP, priority is afforded to applicants willing to live and work in regional Australia.

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 2017–18 Humanitarian Program

In 2017–18, a total of 16,250 visas were granted under the Program. This included 1425 grants under the onshore component and 14,825 grants under the offshore component. In the offshore component, 7909 (53 per cent) were Refugee visas and 6916 (47 per cent) were SHP visas. In 2017–18, the Government continued its commitment to resettling highly vulnerable women by setting aside at least 1550 places within the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program for vulnerable women and their families. As at 30 June 2018, a total of 2126 visas were granted to vulnerable women and their families.

The Community Support Program (CSP) replaces the earlier Community Proposal Pilot (CPP), which commenced on 1 July 2013. Up to 1000 places were set aside for the CSP in 2017-18, and in that time 326 visas were granted under the CSP and its predecessor, the CPP. Places not utilised from the 1000-place CSP allocation were filled through the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and were fully utilised.

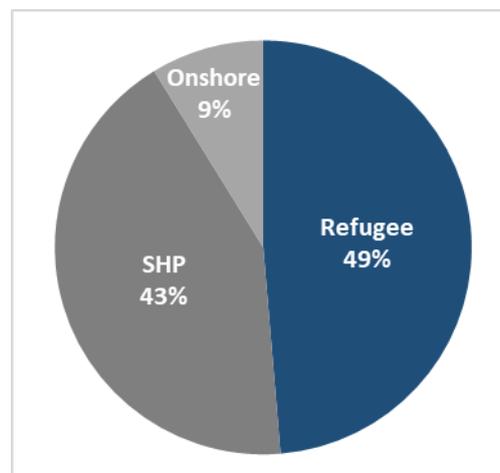


Table 1 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component and category 2017–18

Component	Visa category	Visa grants
Offshore	Refugee	7,909
	SHP	6,916
	Sub-total	14,825
Onshore	Protection (permanent)	1,425
	Sub-total	1,425
Total Program grants 2017–18		16,250

Table 2 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component 2013–14 to 2017–18

Category	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Refugee	6,501	6,002	8,284	9,653	7,909
SHP	4,515	5,007	7,268	10,604	6,916
Onshore	2,752	2,747	2,003	1,711	1,425
Total	13,768	13,756	17,555	21,968	16,250

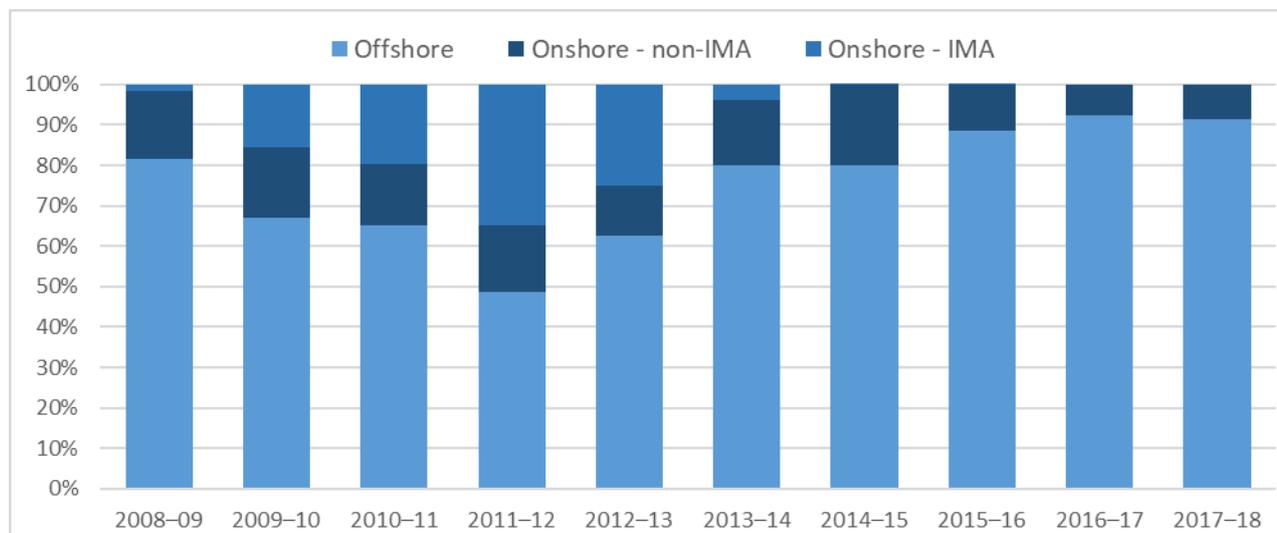
Notes

- 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.
- 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 and Safe Haven Enterprise visas granted to people who arrive as Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) or Unauthorised Air Arrivals in Australia are not included within the Humanitarian Program.

Figure 1 – Onshore/offshore balance within the program 2008–09 to 2017-18



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 2013–14 to 2017–18

Rank	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
1	Afghanistan	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq
2	Iraq	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria
3	Myanmar	Myanmar	Myanmar	Afghanistan	Myanmar
4	Syria	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Myanmar	Congo (DRC)
5	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)	Bhutan	Afghanistan
6	Iran	Eritrea	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)	Eritrea
7	Congo (DRC)	Bhutan	Somalia	Eritrea	Ethiopia
8	Eritrea	Iran	Iran	Ethiopia	Bhutan
9	Somalia	Somalia	Ethiopia	South Sudan	Iran
10	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Somalia	Tibet

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.