



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Discussion Paper

Australia's

Humanitarian

Program 2021–22

Introduction

The Australian Government recognises the importance of engaging with the community to ensure continued support for the Humanitarian Program (the Program). Traditionally the Department of Home Affairs publishes a Discussion Paper each year to inform the public and seek their views on the Program. A discussion paper was not released in 2020 due to COVID- 19.

The Australian public is invited to provide their views on the management and composition of the Humanitarian Program in 2021–22, including options for diversifying the offshore resettlement component and strengthening Program outcomes.

As part of the annual consultation process, 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).

Planning for the management and composition of the Program considers Australia’s capacity to facilitate the successful entry and settlement of humanitarian entrants into our society, and 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 2021–22 Humanitarian Program, please email humanitarian.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au.

Submissions close at 5pm on **28 May 2021**. Submissions received after the 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 900,000 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, 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.

All 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, which are conducted before individuals are granted a visa.

Size of the Humanitarian Program

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, increased to 16,250 places in 2017–18 and 18,750 places in 2018–19 and 2019–20. In recent years, the Government also provided an additional 12,000 places for people displaced by conflict in Syria and Iraq.

A total of 13,171 visas were granted in 2019-20 under the Humanitarian Program, recognising the Government's efforts to manage the impact of COVID-19 and support Australia's COVID-19 recovery. A summary of outcomes of the 2019–20 Humanitarian Program is at **Attachment A**, and the full report is available on the Department's website, at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/australia-offshore-humanitarian-program-2019-20.pdf>.

The 2020-21 Program was set at a ceiling of 13,750, reflecting the impacts of the global pandemic. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring the best possible settlement support for Humanitarian entrants during the COVID-19 economic downturn and its focus on migration to support economic recovery and job creation.

Noting the continued impacts of COVID-19, the size of the 2021-22 Program will be announced as part of the Budget in May 2021.

International context

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected countries all over the world, threatening people's health and livelihoods. Notwithstanding the devastating economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic, millions of refugees worldwide are exposed to worse situations compounded by violence, family separation, border closures, and limited access to health care. The United Nations estimates that in 2021,

there are 80 million¹ forcibly displaced people globally, including over 1.44 million refugees in urgent need of resettlement.

Globally, resettlement remains 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 countries of first asylum and settlement; and
- resettlement, if voluntary return or local integration is not feasible.

As an important protection tool, resettlement provides 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.

As we proceed into the post-pandemic recovery phase, the 2021-22 Humanitarian Program will support Australia's recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and contribute to strong economic and social outcomes.

Australia's role as a resettlement country

Australia is one of a relatively small number of countries that operate an annual permanent resettlement program, and consistently ranks among the top three permanent resettlement countries, in both absolute and per capita terms.

The Humanitarian Program intake has been drawn from a range of nationalities, ethnic and religious groups, reflecting global displacement arising from conflict and persecution.

Snapshot of major humanitarian resettlement groups over time

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)

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/globalappeal2021>.



Australia's Humanitarian Program has two main components: offshore resettlement (for people outside Australia) and onshore protection (for people in Australia). For statistical information on Australia's Humanitarian Program, see: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/live/humanitarian-program>.

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) – generally for people who have fled persecution and are living outside their home country
- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201) – generally 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 able to be 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 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 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.

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 have 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.

The Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services led a review into the CSP in 2020, which included a series of consultations with a range of stakeholders, including CSP participants, refugee-led groups, NGOs, faith groups and industry peak bodies. The Coordinator-General is currently finalising advice to the Government on the major findings of the Review.

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 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 offers many humanitarian entrants the chance to rebuild their lives in a safe and welcoming environment. Some humanitarian entrants come from rural backgrounds and prefer to live and work in regional communities. Many humanitarian entrants go on to make contributions to their new communities in Australia through small business development, helping to fill labour shortages, stimulating the local economy and helping to sustain local schools and services.

The Australian Government remains committed to increasing regional humanitarian settlement to support growth in smaller cities and regions, with a target of 50 per cent of humanitarian entrants to be settled in a regional location by 2022. For migration purposes, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (including Logan) are categorised as metropolitan locations and all other locations are categorised as regional. The Government is aware that for increased regional settlement of humanitarian entrants to be successful, a sustainable and coordinated approach is required once borders reopen. This approach prioritises the needs of both humanitarian entrants moving to regional locations and the regional communities that support them. However, the locations where humanitarian entrants settle are largely determined by their visa pathway and 'links' to family and friends in Australia.

The proportion of humanitarian entrants settled in a regional location has increased from 36.8 per cent in 2018–19 to 38.6 per cent in 2019–20.

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, and encouraging their independence and participation in the Australian community. Settlement services are delivered through the Department of Home Affairs and provide early, tailored and intensive support to refugees and humanitarian entrants in the first five years after their arrival in Australia.

For more information on settlement services see: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia>.

The Government is committed to improving settlement and integration outcomes for new arrivals, through implementing all recommendations (in full or in part) from the independent *Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants* (the Shergold review). In response to these recommendations, the Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services was appointed in late 2019 to strengthen employment, English language acquisition, and community integration outcomes for refugees and other migrants with specific assistance needs.

For more information, see: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/reviews-and-inquiries/inquiries/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants>.

Submissions

This discussion paper has been developed to gather your views and feedback on Australia's Humanitarian Program. The Department of Home Affairs invites submissions to inform the development and composition of the Program in 2021-22, to help ensure it delivers effective and strong outcomes for people in humanitarian needs. Submissions should be sent to humanitarian.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au by 5pm on **28 May 2021**.

ATTACHMENT A

Outcomes of the 2019–20 Humanitarian Program

In 2019–20, a total of 13,171 visas were granted under the Humanitarian Program, falling short of the target of 18,750 places due to COVID-19. The 2019–20 Program included 1,650 grants under the onshore component and 11,521 grants under the offshore component. In the offshore component, 6,422 (56 per cent) were Refugee visas and 5,099 (44 per cent) were SHP visas. In 2019–20, the Government continued its commitment to resettling highly vulnerable women and 2,345 visas were granted to vulnerable women and their families.

Up to 750 places were set aside for the CSP in 2019–20, and in that time, 417 visas were granted under the CSP and its predecessor, the Community Proposal Pilot (CPP).

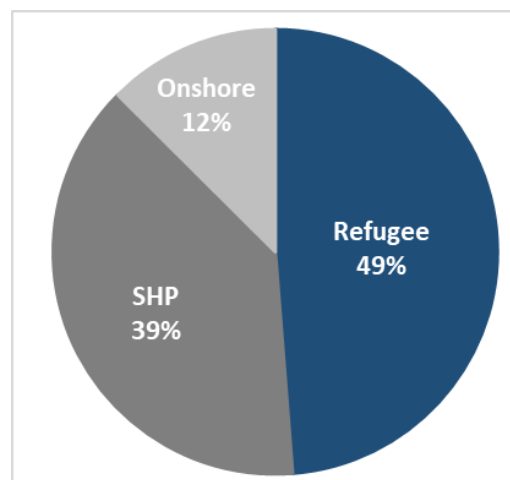


Table 1 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component and category 2019–20

Component	Visa category	Visa grants
Offshore	Refugee	6,422
	SHP	5,099
	Sub-total	11,521
Onshore	Protection (permanent)	1,650
	Sub-total	1,650
Total Program grants 2019–20		13,171

Table 2 – Humanitarian Program outcomes by component 2015–16 to 2019–20

Category	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
Refugee	8,284	9,653	7,909	9,451	6,422
SHP	7,268	10,604	6,916	7,661	5,099
Onshore	2,003	1,711	1,425	1,650	1,650
Total	17,555	21,968	16,250	18,762	13,171

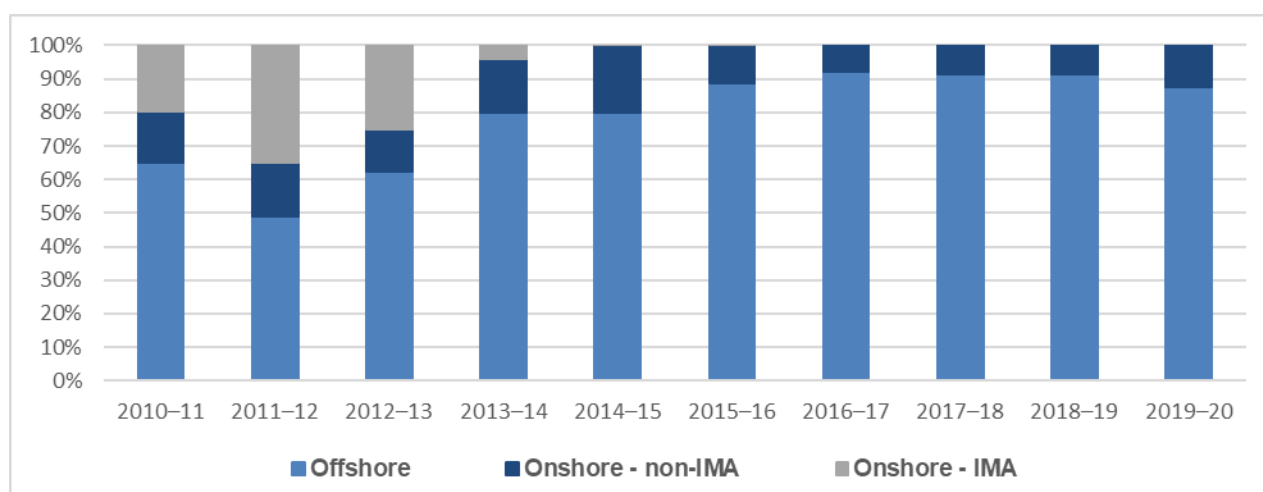
Notes

- 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 2010–11 to 2019–20



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 3 – Top nationalities within the offshore component 2015–16 to 2019–20

Rank	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
1	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq
2	Syria	Syria	Syria	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)
3	Myanmar	Afghanistan	Myanmar	Myanmar	Syria
4	Afghanistan	Myanmar	Congo (DRC)	Syria	Myanmar
5	Congo (DRC)	Bhutan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
6	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Eritrea
7	Somalia	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Ethiopia
8	Iran	Ethiopia	Bhutan	Iran	Central African Republic
9	Ethiopia	South Sudan	Iran	Bhutan	Iran
10	Eritrea	Somalia	Tibet	Tibet	Stateless

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. Statistics up to 2018–19 are based on country of birth. From 2019–20 they are based on citizenship. The country of birth or citizenship of the principal visa applicants is applied to secondary visa applicants.
3. The 2015–16 and 2016–17 statistics in these tables 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.