



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Discussion Paper

Australia's Humanitarian Program 2023–24

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 Program outcomes.

As part of the annual 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 August 2022 consultation process informed the composition and policy settings for the 2022-23 Program. The Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP, hosted three consultation meetings in August 2022, and the Department received a total of 115 written submissions in response to the [Humanitarian Program 2022-23 Discussion Paper](#).

This paper provides background information to **inform written submissions for the 2023-24 Humanitarian Program**. It includes an overview of the Program and information on its key features.

Planning for the management and composition of the 2023-24 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 risks to the Australian community.

The 2022-23 consultation summary has recently been published on the Department's website. If you would like to make a written submission on Australia's 2023-24 Program, please email humanitarian.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au.

Submissions close at 5pm on **Wednesday, 31 May 2023**. Submissions received after the deadline may not be considered.

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 outside their home country, 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.

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 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.

Priority is given to refugees with good settlement prospects who are between 18 and 50 years of age, have adequate English, who have an offer of employment or a pathway that leads to employment, and/or who have personal attributes that would enable them to become financially self-sufficient within 12 months of arrival.

The Commonwealth Coordinator-General for Migrant Services led a review into the CSP in 2020-21, which included a series of consultations with a range of stakeholders, including CSP entrants, refugee-led groups, non-government organisations (NGOs), faith groups and industry peak bodies. Findings from the CSP Review demonstrate that the Australian public, together with State, Territory and local governments are seeking to do more to support refugees to settle in Australia.

Following the review, changes to the CSP commenced on 19 August 2022 to make the program more accessible. These include reducing the visa application charge for applicants.

The Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP)

The Government is investing \$8.6 million in the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP), which will support 1,500 individuals to participate in the CRISP over four years. The CRISP was designed to trial a new community-supported settlement pathway in Australia, in response to the CSP Review. The CRISP aims to achieve optimal settlement outcomes with the help of Australian community members who want to help refugees settle into life in Australia.

Refugees arriving through the CRISP will have access to the same income support and Medicare as other refugees arriving in Australia, however CRISP participants will be helped to settle by a group of trained community volunteers, rather than government-funded settlement service providers. Supporters will provide a range of practical and in-kind settlement and integration support, including help with finding housing, work and learning English.

The CRISP provides a dedicated settlement pathway for un-linked refugees: those without existing connections (such as family) to Australia, referred to Australia by the UNHCR.

Afghanistan Response

The Government is committed to supporting the Afghan community, and has allocated 26,500 dedicated places in the Humanitarian Program for Afghan nationals through to 2025-26.

Afghan citizens are prioritised for processing within the Program. Within the Program's places for Afghan nationals, priority will be given to Afghans outside Afghanistan who are:

- certified former Locally Engaged Employees (LEE) and their immediate family members;
- immediate family members (spouse, children under 18) of holders of Refugee and Humanitarian (Class XB) visas;
- refugees who have been referred by the UNHCR to Australia for resettlement; and

- women and girls, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ and other identified minority groups.

Afghan nationals are also able to pursue other migration pathways to Australia depending on their circumstances, including through the CSP, the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot, the Family stream, and Skilled visa categories.

Onshore Component

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*.

Myanmar Caseload

In November 2022, the Australian Government designated Myanmar nationals in Australia as a priority caseload in the onshore component of the Program. Myanmar nationals currently residing in Australia, and who arrived with a valid visa, will have their application for protection prioritised by the Department.

Humanitarian Program - Processing

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.

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, with the number of visas to be granted under the Program set on an annual basis. Australia is also considering and piloting innovative complementary pathways to further its aspirations for refugee and humanitarian resettlement.

In 2022-23, the Program was set at a ceiling of 17,875 places (including Afghan places), demonstrating Australia's commitment to contribute to global resettlement efforts, which were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during previous program years.

The 2022-23 offshore component of the Program focuses on refugees outside their home country, of nationalities from three major regions. The offshore intake includes:

- humanitarian entrants from the Middle East, including from Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey among others;
- refugees and SHP entrants from Asia, including from Myanmar, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Laos among others;
- humanitarian entrants from Africa, including from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan; and
- a number of places unallocated to a region, to account for unforeseen need.



At 24 March 2023:

- A total of 11,650 visas were granted under the 2022-23 Program.
- There were approximately 8,200 offshore humanitarian visa holders (granted since 01 July 2019) who were yet to travel to Australia.
 - The Department is working on moving these visa holders to Australia as efficiently as possible, taking account of the capacity of settlement service providers.

Program statistics and reporting for the 2022-23 Program will be published on the Department's website when available.

The Government aspires to gradually increase the size of the Program to benefit refugees, in particular those most in need of international protection, and the international refugee protection system. Increasing the size of the Program will also benefit Australia's prosperity and social resilience, as we gain skills, labour, and diverse cultural vibrancy that ultimately boost our economy and enrich our society.

Australia's role as a resettlement country

Australia is one of a relatively small number of countries that operate an annual permanent resettlement program. 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. In line with our pledge to support new resettlement states, made at the 2021 Global Compact on Refugees High Level Officials meeting, 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.

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

Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot

The Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement 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.

This provides real opportunities for people to resume their careers and rebuild their lives. This is also a win for Australia – for Australian employers and communities as we gain highly sought after skills that boost our economy and enrich our society.

Other complementary pathways

Australia is exploring options for new and expanded complementary pathways that align with the Government's aspiration to progressively increase the Program, and which will build on lessons learned from the above pilots and findings from relevant reviews, including the 2020 CSP Review.

Strengthening community sponsorship pathways is key to supporting Australia's government refugee intake. In harnessing the enthusiasm and generosity of the Australian community, we have a special opportunity to match UNHCR-referred refugees with local community groups who provide practical settlement and integration support, including navigating housing, education, employment, and learning English in Australia.

Snapshot of major humanitarian resettlement groups over time

The 2023-24 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 (Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia)• Asia (Burma/Myanmar, Bhutan)

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

Regional Settlement

Many humanitarian entrants go on to make valuable 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.


Through the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group, the Department facilitates collaboration between Commonwealth, state, territory and local government representatives on all settlement issues including regional settlement. Consultations arising through this group assist in informing federal government policy and identify opportunities for constructive engagement across jurisdictions. This contribution is highly valued.

In 2022-23, the Department continued to actively work towards settling humanitarian entrants in regional areas, to monitor and support regional humanitarian entrants' settlement where possible, however, the 50 percent regional settlement target was removed from Program settings. This setting was removed to mitigate the risk that the focus on regional settlement is aimed at achieving a numerical target, as opposed to achieving good settlement outcomes for arrivals.

Settlement assistance to Humanitarian Program entrants

We are proud to deliver a Humanitarian Program that considers the entire settlement journey of a refugee. From when someone first arrives in Australia, our settlement services and programs are designed to ensure refugees and humanitarian entrants can rebuild their lives, careers and families not just in safety, but with stability and security, so that they can fulfil their potential and become full and equal participants in Australian society.

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 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>.

In addition, work is underway to implement a range of settlement measures targeted at refugee and humanitarian entrants. For example, the Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) grant program provides funding to social enterprises to lift employment outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low English language proficiency and low skill levels.

Work is also underway to review and improve the design of the Australia's world-leading settlement services model with a view to enhancing settlement outcomes. The Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP, hosted three roundtable meetings in November and December 2022 with key settlement organisations and with former refugee and humanitarian entrants to gain the 'lived experience' perspective.

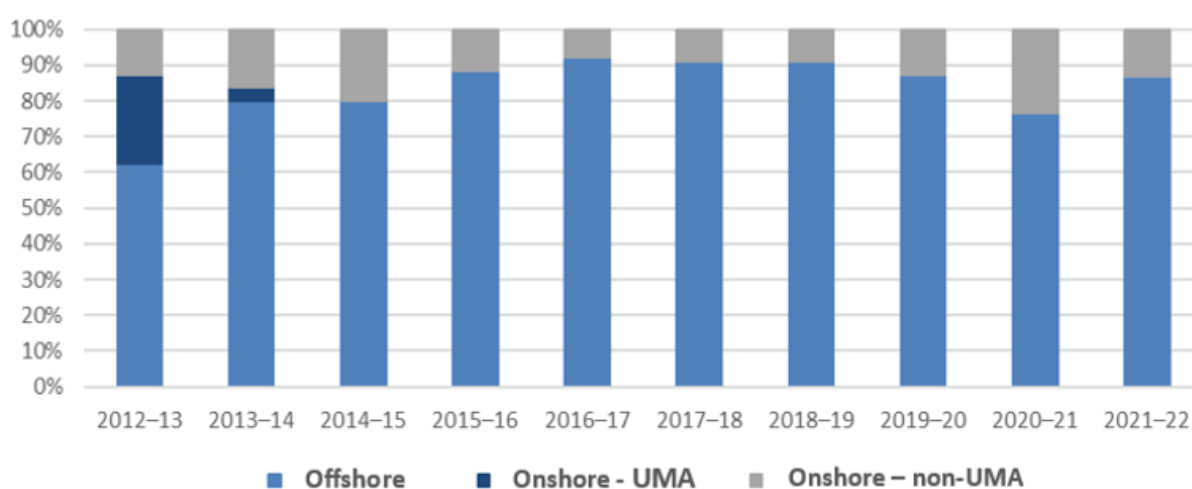
The Department received more than 65 written submissions in response to the discussion paper [*Next Steps to Improve Australia's Settlement and Integration of Refugees*](#), held focus groups with former refugee and humanitarian entrants, and conducted an online survey of grassroots settlement providers. This comprehensive consultation process generated significant interest, eliciting insights and suggestions which are currently informing the program design of the next settlement services model.

ATTACHMENT A

Onshore/offshore balance within the Humanitarian Program

The 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. 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 2012–13 to 2021–22



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 for applicants granted visas within the offshore component 2016–17 to 2021–22

Rank	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22
1	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Afghanistan
2	Syria	Syria	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)	Myanmar	Iraq
3	Afghanistan	Myanmar	Myanmar	Syria	Afghanistan	Myanmar
4	Myanmar	Congo (DRC)	Syria	Myanmar	Syria	Syria
5	Bhutan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Eritrea	Congo (DRC)
6	Congo (DRC)	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Pakistan	Pakistan
7	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Iran	Eritrea
8	Ethiopia	Bhutan	Iran	CAR	Congo (DRC)	Ethiopia
9	South Sudan	Iran	Bhutan	Iran	Stateless	CAR
10	Somalia	Tibet	Tibet	Stateless	Venezuela	Iran

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. The 2015–16 and 2016–17 statistics in these tables includes visas granted towards the annual offshore resettlement component of the 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.
5. CAR refers to Central African Republic.

Table 4 - Top nationalities for applicants granted visas within the onshore component (PPV) 2016–17 to 2021–22

Rank	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
1	Iraq	Iraq	Iran	Turkiye	Iran	Iran
2	Pakistan	Pakistan	Iraq	Iran	Pakistan	China (Exc. SAR)
3	Libya	Libya	Pakistan	Pakistan	Turkiye	Pakistan
4	Iran	Malaysia	Turkiye	Iraq	China (Exc SAR)	Afghanistan
5	China (Exc. SAR)	China (Exc. SAR)	Malaysia	Saudi Arabia	Iraq	Turkiye
6	Afghanistan	Iran	Libya	China (Exc. SAR)	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea
7	Syria	Syria	China (Exc. SAR)	Afghanistan	Yemen	Yemen
8	Egypt	Bangladesh	Syria	Venezuela	Malaysia	Venezuela
9	Lebanon	Egypt	Afghanistan	Papua New Guinea	Venezuela	Ethiopia
10	Papua New Guinea	Ethiopia	India	Yemen	Nigeria	Egypt