Media

Fact Sheet 60 – Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program

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Australia's Immigration Program has two components:

- Migration Program for skilled and family migrants
- Humanitarian Program for refugees and others in refugee-like situations.

This fact sheet provides details of Australia's Humanitarian Program. Details of the Migration Program are available in Fact Sheets 20–40.

See: Fact Sheet Index

Background information

One of the major challenges facing the world today is protecting refugees who have been forced to leave their homes by armed conflict and human rights abuses.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there were 43.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2010, the highest number in 15 years. Of these, 27.5 million were internally displaced persons, 15.4 million were refugees and 837 500 asylum seekers.

See: www.unhcr.org

As a member of the international community, Australia shares responsibility for protecting these refugees and resolving refugee situations. This commitment is most strongly expressed through the Humanitarian Program.
Humanitarian Program

The Humanitarian Program has two important functions:

- the onshore protection/asylum component fulfils Australia's international obligations by offering protection to people already in Australia who are found to be refugees according to the Refugees Convention
- the offshore resettlement component expresses Australia's commitment to refugee protection by going beyond these obligations and offering resettlement to people overseas for whom this is the most appropriate option.

Onshore protection

The onshore component of the Humanitarian Program aims to provide options for people who wish to apply for protection (or asylum) after arrival in Australia.

More information on the onshore component of the program is available on the department’s website.

See: Seeking protection in Australia (58KB PDF file)

Offshore resettlement

The offshore resettlement component comprises two categories of permanent visas. These are:

- **Refugee**—for people who are subject to persecution in their home country, who are typically outside their home country, and are in need of resettlement. The majority of applicants who are considered under this category are identified and referred by UNHCR to Australia for resettlement. The Refugee category includes the Refugee, In-country Special Humanitarian, Emergency Rescue and Woman at Risk visa subclasses.
- **Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)**—for people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country, and immediate family of persons who have been granted protection in Australia. Applications for entry under the SHP must be supported by a proposer who is an Australian citizen, permanent resident or eligible New Zealand citizen, or an organisation that is based in Australia.

**Note:** There are a limited number of SHP visas available. Demand for these visas is extremely high. This means that applications may take several years to be decided and most will be unsuccessful.

See: Proposing an applicant
Composition of the offshore resettlement program

The size and composition of the resettlement program are influenced by a number of factors. These include:

- UNHCR assessments of the resettlement needs of refugees overseas
- the views of individuals and organisations in Australia conveyed during community consultations with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
- Australia's capacity to assist.

Outcomes of 2010–11 program

In 2010–11 a total of 13 799 visas were granted under the Humanitarian Program, of which 8971 visas were granted under the offshore component and 4828 visas were granted under the onshore component. See the tables below for further details on the 2010–11 program outcomes.

Woman at Risk

In 2010–11, 759 visas (12.7 per cent) of the Refugee category were granted to Woman at Risk visa applicants, exceeding the nominal annual target of 12 per cent.

Applications

In 2010–11, a total of 54 396 applications were made for visas under the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program. Of these, 29 793 were made under the Refugee category and 24 603 were made under the SHP category.

Note: The high demand for visas mean that it may take several years for applications to be decided and most will be unsuccessful.

Humanitarian Program figures

| Humanitarian Program grants by category 2006–07 to 2010–11 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Refugee         | 6003   | 6004   | 64992  | 6003   | 5998   |
| Special Humanitarian (offshore) | 5183   | 4795   | 4511   | 3233   | 2973   |
| Onshore¹        | 1793   | 2131   | 2492   | 4534   | 4828   |
| Temporary Humanitarian Concern | 38     | 84     | 5      | -      | -      |
| Total           | 13 017 | 13 014 | 13 507 | 13 770 | 13 799 |
1 Includes protection visas and onshore humanitarian visa grants that are countable under the Humanitarian Program.
2 This figure included a one-off allocation of 500 refugee places for Iraqis.

2010–11 offshore visa grants by top ten countries of birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Number of visas granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>2151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>1443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (DRC)</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>381</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More information on the 2010–11 Humanitarian Program is on the department's website.  
See: [Humanitarian Program Statistics](http://www.immi.gov.au)

More detailed statistics on the past Humanitarian Programs are available in the department's annual reports.  
See: [Departmental Annual Reports](http://www.immi.gov.au)

Further information is available on the department's website.  

The department also operates a national general enquiries line.  
**Telephone:** 131 881

**Hours of operation:** Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. Recorded information is available outside these hours.

Fact Sheet 60. Produced by the National Communications Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.  
Last Reviewed November 2011.

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Acknowledgements

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