



# Australia's Humanitarian Program

Information Paper

April 2011

## INTRODUCTION

The displacement of people due to conflict and persecution is one of the major challenges facing the world today. As a member of the global community, Australia shares responsibility for protecting refugees worldwide and resolving refugee situations through the system of international refugee protection.

This commitment is most strongly expressed through Australia's Humanitarian Program which aims to respond to global humanitarian and resettlement needs, to enhance Australia's international position and most significantly, to be one in which the Australian community has confidence.

The Australian Government is always interested to hear the views of the Australian community on the Humanitarian Program, and takes these into consideration in planning for and building future years' programs.

This information paper includes the following:

- background on the Program, including the aims and the structure of the onshore and offshore components
- a short history of the Program which shows the waves of humanitarian migration over the years
- the international context in which the current Program operates and
- information on its size and composition over previous years, and the outcomes in the past year.

This paper also outlines some challenges that are currently facing the Program and some issues that could be addressed when considering improvements to the responsiveness and delivery of the Humanitarian Program.

## BACKGROUND

### Aims of the Humanitarian Program

Australia's Humanitarian Program aims to:

- assist people in humanitarian need overseas, for whom resettlement in another country is the only available option
- share the responsibility for refugee protection with the international community and
- honour Australia's obligations as a signatory to the *1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* ('Refugees Convention') and its 1967 Protocol<sup>1</sup> and other international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party.

### Components of the Humanitarian Program

The Humanitarian Program has an *onshore* and an *offshore* component:

- The onshore component provides protection to persons who have entered Australia and who engage Australia's protection obligations under the Refugees Convention.
- The offshore component provides resettlement to persons outside Australia who are subject to persecution or substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country.

### Onshore component

People within Australia who are found to be refugees, in line with the Refugees Convention definition, are eligible for protection in Australia. However, people found to be refugees must also satisfy health, character and security checks before they are granted permanent Protection (class XA) visas from the onshore component of the Humanitarian Program.

Any person seeking Australia's protection has their claims assessed, on a case-by-case basis, against the Refugees Convention criteria with reference to detailed and up-to-date information on conditions in the applicant's home country.

People who are found not to be refugees and have no lawful basis to remain in Australia are required by law to be removed as soon as practicable. In line with our international obligations, however, Australia will not return a person to a country where their life or freedom will be threatened.

Australia's fundamental obligation under the Refugees Convention is not to return refugees to places where their lives or liberties are in danger (*non-refoulement*). The commitment to protect those found to be refugees is maintained for any person who seeks Australia's protection, regardless of how they arrive in Australia.

Australia is one of many countries responding to the global increase in asylum claims, although Australia receives low numbers by international comparison.

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* and the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* (the Refugees Convention) defines refugees as people who are outside their country of nationality and unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. It obliges signatories not to expel or return refugees to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

## Offshore component

Visas granted under the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program confer the right of Australian permanent residence on the holder.

The offshore component of the Humanitarian Program has two categories:

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



The Refugee category is for people who are subject to persecution in their home country and for whom resettlement in Australia is the best durable solution.<sup>2</sup> Australia works closely with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in selecting people under this category.

The Refugee category has four visa subclasses:

- Refugee (subclass 200)
  - the applicant is living outside their home country in a country of first asylum and
  - is subject to persecution in their home country and
  - is in need of resettlement.

The UNHCR provides advice to the Australian Government on the need for resettlement.

- In-country Special Humanitarian Program (subclass 201)
  - the applicant is in their home country and
  - is subject to persecution.

Only a small number of places are available under this subclass.

- Emergency Rescue (subclass 203)
  - the applicant is subject to persecution in their home country and
  - there are urgent and compelling reasons for them to be resettled in Australia.

Usually the UNHCR requests urgent assistance on behalf of these applicants. Only a small number of places are available under this subclass.

- Woman at Risk (subclass 204)
  - the applicant is a woman living outside her home country in a country of first asylum
  - is subject to persecution in their home country or are registered as being 'of concern' to the UNHCR
  - is without the protection of a male relative and
  - is in danger of victimisation, harassment or serious abuse because they are female.

Each year, Australia sets a nominal target of at least 12 per cent of its offshore refugee places being granted to persons selected under the Woman at Risk subclass.

The *Special Humanitarian Program (SHP)* is for applicants who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of their human rights and who are living outside their home country. It also provides for the immediate family of persons granted protection in Australia. Applications for SHP visas must be accompanied by a proposal from an Australian citizen or permanent resident over 18 years of age, or an eligible New Zealand citizen, or an organisation operating in Australia.

There are limited places under the SHP and each year many people are proposed under this program. Australia does not have the capacity to accept every applicant. Priority under the SHP is given to immediate family members.

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<sup>2</sup> The UNHCR advocates three 'durable solutions' for refugees: voluntary return, local integration and resettlement in a third country.

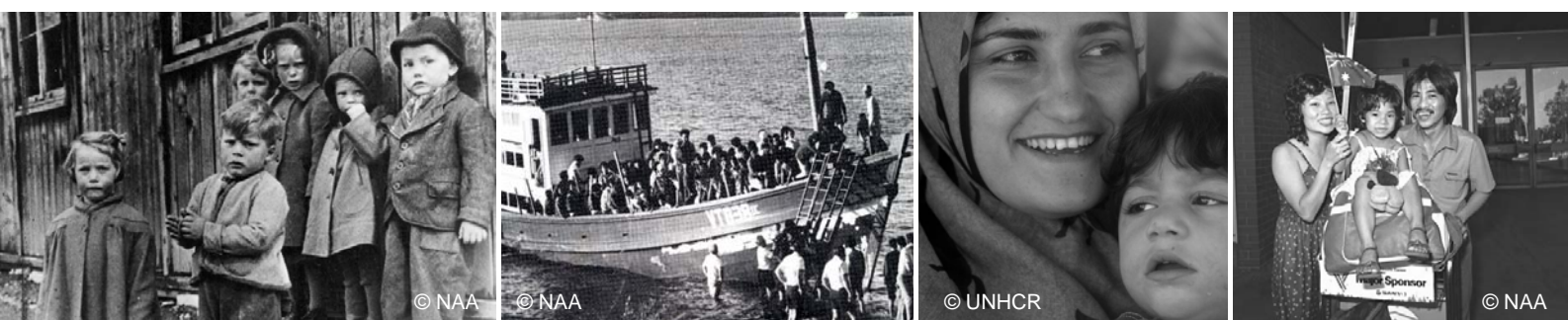
## A short history of the Program

Australia has a proud record of resettling refugees and people in humanitarian need from around the world. Humanitarian resettlement in Australia began around 1947, with the resettlement of people displaced by World War II.

Since this time, Australia has welcomed over 750 000 people from different countries under Australia's Humanitarian Program, in response to changing global resettlement and humanitarian needs.

This includes the resettlement of:

- 170 000 Eastern Europeans between 1947 and 1954 who had been displaced by World War II
- thousands of refugees from the mid 1950s to the late 1960s from crises throughout Europe, including the Hungarian uprising and the Warsaw Pact military intervention in Czechoslovakia
- more than 16 000 people from Central and South America following political turmoil in their countries in the early 1970s
- around 18 000 Lebanese in 1975 who had been displaced by civil war
- over 150 000 Indochinese refugees since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the conflicts in Laos and Cambodia.



The Indochinese refugee crisis became the focus of the Humanitarian Program for close to a decade and prompted the Government of the time to introduce a new national refugee policy and administrative machinery in 1977. Previously, Australia's refugee resettlement was primarily in response to specific international events as they occurred. Some of the components of the new refugee policy included procedures for a regular and planned program, international engagement to resolve refugee situations, and for the establishment of an efficient and fair mechanism to determine onshore claims.

Almost all arrivals under the Humanitarian Program were refugees up until late 1981. The SHP was introduced in this year, to provide resettlement in Australia for people who, while not being refugees, were living outside their home country, had suffered substantial discrimination amounting to a gross violation of human rights in their home country and who had family or community ties to Australia.

By the mid 1980s, the Humanitarian Program had a global focus and applicants who had family or other close links to Australia were prioritised. Resettlement from Eastern Europe continued during this period but up to 40 nationalities were also being resettled in Australia, including people from Latin/Central America and the Middle East.

The Humanitarian Program continued to evolve over the next two decades to meet the resettlement needs of particular people. The Woman at Risk and Emergency Rescue visa subclasses were introduced in the late 1980s, followed by the introduction of the Special Assistance Category (SAC) in 1991.

The SAC was introduced by the Government of the time to reach 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 and who were either in or outside their normal country of residence. SACs were introduced for groups such as citizens of the former Yugoslavia, who had been displaced by war in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the global need for resettlement, successive governments have increased the size of the Humanitarian Program in the last decade from 12 000 places in 1998–99, to 13 500 places in 2008–09 and currently to 13 750 places. Initially Europe was the largest source region during the last decade, primarily driven by conflict in the former Yugoslavia. However, during 2003 and 2005 Australia resettled a large number of refugees from a wide range of countries from the Africa region. This region continues to be a key focus of the Humanitarian Program.

The Middle East and South West Asia are also key focus regions of the current Humanitarian Program. Significant numbers of people from these regions continue to be in need of humanitarian assistance due to various conflicts, primarily in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Asia has also been a focus of the Humanitarian Program since 2005, with the resettlement of refugees in protracted situations such as the Burmese in Thailand and the Bhutanese in Nepal.<sup>4</sup>

Like the shifting composition of the Humanitarian Program, many changes have occurred to policy and processing under the Program since its inception. In addition to the introduction of new refugee policy and new visa subclasses described above, these changes include:

- the separation of the Migration and Humanitarian Programs to provide a better balance between the objectives of each Program
- improving program management by numerically linking the onshore and offshore components of the Humanitarian Program, so that onshore Protection visa grants are drawn from an annual allocation of visa places shared with the SHP
- a range of operational and legislative measures in response to increased numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat.

Regarding this latter issue, over the past 30 years there have been a number of major ‘waves’ of people in response to humanitarian crises, who have sought Australia’s protection and have arrived by boat in Australia (currently referred to as Irregular Maritime Arrivals or IMAs). In addition to the recent increase in the number of people arriving by boat in Australia, this includes:

- **1976–1981** – just over 2000 people arrived in an irregular manner by boat, mainly from Vietnam.
- **1989–1998** – around 3100 people arrived in an irregular manner by boat, mainly from Cambodia, Vietnam and Southern China.
- **1999–2001** – nearly 12 200 people arrived in an irregular manner by boat, mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq.

The recent increase in the number of people arriving by boat in Australia has implications for the Humanitarian Program, as discussed in the last section of this paper.

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<sup>3</sup> Following a review of the SAC program in 1996 all SACs were gradually brought to a close by the end of 2001.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as a refugee population of 25 000 persons or more who have been in exile for at least five consecutive years.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

One of the Government's key priorities is to enhance Australia's engagement with the United Nations and strengthening our partnership with UNHCR is an important part of the commitment. Australia enjoys a productive working relationship with UNHCR and resettlement partners in the international community. Australia is an active participant in strategies to respond to the plight of refugees and displaced persons. It is guided in this endeavour by UNHCR's focus on the principles of the strategic use of resettlement particularly in protracted refugee situations and urban based refugee populations.

UNHCR has estimated global resettlement needs (including populations where resettlement is envisioned over a period of several years) at around 805 500 persons. In 2011 alone, UNHCR estimates resettlement needs will be about 172 000 persons with only about 80 000 places offered by resettlement countries, leaving a shortfall of about 90 000 places.<sup>5</sup>

UNHCR has promoted a range of strategies to encourage resettlement countries to work towards reducing the protection gap.

Australia's policy approaches consistent with UNHCR's priorities and international trends include:

- working with UNHCR, and other resettlement countries, to encourage the expansion of resettlement and to share Australia's resettlement expertise with new resettlement states
- providing support through the 'Displaced Persons Program'<sup>6</sup>
- participating in the strategic use of resettlement to unlock other durable solutions in protracted refugee situations
- using a multi-year resettlement approach to make a longer term commitment to caseloads that are part of large scale resettlement exercises, allowing UNHCR to better plan its resettlement activities and provide more certainty for host countries and
- participating in international resettlement activities that demonstrates Australia's commitment to burden-sharing.

Australia's Humanitarian Program responds to global resettlement challenges and remains consistent with multilateral solutions for assisting refugees and displaced people.



<sup>5</sup> UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The Displaced Persons Program is administered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in consultation with AusAID and provides funding for humanitarian related projects.

## **‘Seven Priority Situations’**

UNHCR has maintained a strong focus on protracted refugee situations. UNHCR refers to the role of resettlement in unlocking other solutions in protracted refugee situations and refers to the recent adoption of the ‘Seven Priority Situations’ by the Working Group on Resettlement in Geneva.

The seven situations include:

- Somalis in Dadaab Camp, Kenya
- Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon
- Iraqis and Iranians in Turkey
- Afghans in Uzbekistan
- Afghans in Iran
- Various nationalities in the Pacific states and
- Eritreans in Libya

Australia is currently already resettling refugees from some of these priority situations.

## **The strategic use of resettlement in ‘Protracted Refugee Situations’**

Focusing strategic resettlement activity on specific situations allows for individually-focused and well-planned strategies which should assist greatly in comprehensively resolving the priority situations. The strategies identified for priority situations, such as the seven identified by UNHCR, requires a cooperative and coordinated approach among resettlement countries and a whole of government focus domestically to explore effective strategies.

Australia fully appreciates the value of using resettlement strategically. Australia is also keenly aware that resettlement can act as a catalyst for other solutions, such as a safe return home or local integration, however limited they may be in scope, in protracted refugee situations.

Along with UNHCR and other countries, Australia has participated in successful exercises to focus attention and develop strategies to unlock solutions for protracted refugee situations.

For example, Australia has worked with other resettlement countries over a number of years to resettle Bhutanese refugees from camps in Nepal. This cooperative approach encompassed a range of strategies across a range of government activities that were successful in allowing large-scale resettlement to commence.



## Regional Cooperation Framework

The Australian Government is seeking to work with regional partners to build a sustainable Regional Cooperation Framework (the framework) to enhance the region's response to irregular migration, improve consistency in the treatment of refugees and undermine the people smuggling trade.

Cooperation between source, transit and destination countries affected by people smuggling, as well as with international organisations such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), will be important to the success of any regional response.

The Australian Government believes this will be the most effective way of reducing irregular movements through the region and increasing the collective integrity of our borders. The framework would allow for the strategic application of the region's resources to ensure that protection is provided for those in need while discouraging irregular movement. The framework would also aim to enlist broader international support for the provision of durable solutions for refugees in the region in the spirit of burden sharing.

The framework would be based upon humanitarian principles and informed by UNHCR's 10 Point Plan of Action for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration. For more information on the "10 Point Plan", please refer to UNHCR's website at: [www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4742a30b4.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/4742a30b4.pdf)

## SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

### Developing the Program through consultation

Australia's Humanitarian Program follows the financial year 1 July to 30 June. A consultation process occurs each year to inform the Australian Government's decisions about the size and composition of the Humanitarian Program. This includes:

- consultations with states and territories and other government agencies
- consultation with peak refugee and humanitarian bodies
- consideration of UNHCR advice on global resettlement needs and priorities and
- consideration of the views of the Australian community.

The Australian Government welcomes your views on the Humanitarian Program. These can be sent by email to [humanitarian.submission@immi.gov.au](mailto:humanitarian.submission@immi.gov.au).

### A flexible Program

The Humanitarian Program is characterised by its flexibility, as is evident from the history of the Program discussed above. This allows it to respond to evolving humanitarian situations and global resettlement need.

The figures on the following pages illustrate the shifting composition of the Humanitarian Program over the last ten years.

**Table 1: Top ten nationalities within the Humanitarian Program (offshore and onshore) between 2000–2001 and 2009–10**

**Top ten nationalities\* within Australia's Humanitarian Program (offshore and onshore)**

**Offshore Humanitarian Program**

Rank	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05
1	Former Yugoslavia	Former Yugoslavia	Sudan	Sudan	Sudan
2	Croatia	Sudan	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq
3	Iraq	Iraq	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
4	Sudan	Afghanistan	Former Yugoslavia	Ethiopia	Liberia
5	Bosnia Herzegovina	Croatia	Ethiopia	Iran	Sierra Leone
6	Iran	Ethiopia	Iran	Liberia	Burundi
7	Afghanistan	Bosnia Herzegovina	Liberia	Former Yugoslavia	Burma
8	Sierra Leone	Iran	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	Congo (DRC)
9	Somalia	Sierra Leone	Croatia	Congo (ROC)	Iran
10	Ethiopia	Somalia	Somalia	Somalia	Somalia
Rank	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
1	Sudan	Sudan	Burma	Iraq	Burma
2	Iraq	Burma	Iraq	Burma	Iraq
3	Afghanistan	Iraq	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Bhutan
4	Burma	Afghanistan	Sudan	Sudan	Afghanistan
5	Liberia	Burundi	Liberia	Bhutan	Congo (DRC)
6	Burundi	Congo (DRC)	Congo (DRC)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
7	Sierra Leone	Liberia	Burundi	Congo (DRC)	Somalia
8	Congo (DRC)	Sierra Leone	Iran	Somalia	Sudan
9	Eritrea	Eritrea	Sierra Leone	Liberia	Liberia
10	Iran	Iran	Sri Lanka	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone

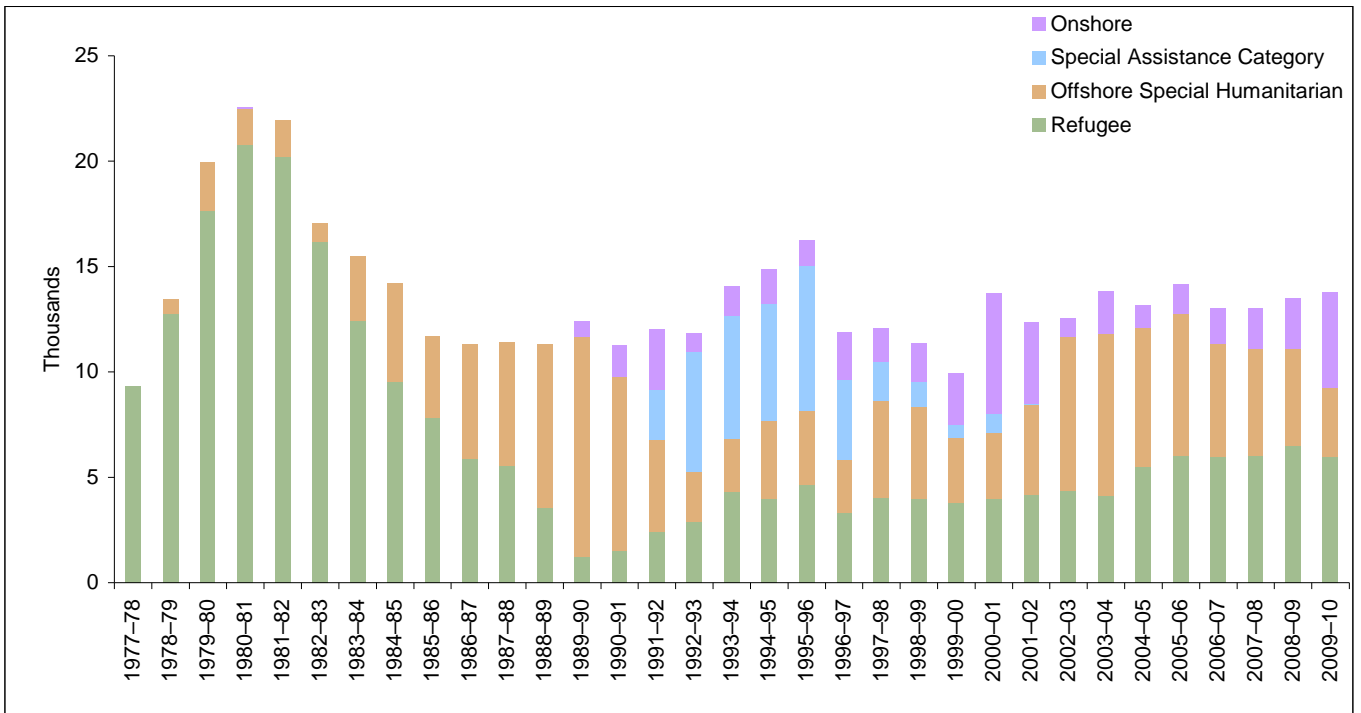
**Onshore Humanitarian Program**

Rank	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05
1	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Iran	China (PRC)
2	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Iran	China (PRC)	Iran
3	Iran	Iran	Sri Lanka	Iraq	Afghanistan
4	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Afghanistan	Russian Federation	Iraq
5	Burma	China (PRC)	Burma	Colombia	Sri Lanka
6	Former Yugoslavia	Palestinian Authority	China (PRC)	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh
7	Stateless	Stateless	Colombia	Bangladesh	Zimbabwe
8	Turkey	Turkey	Russian Federation	Former Yugoslavia	Pakistan
9	Palestinian Authority	Burma	Turkey	Zimbabwe	Indonesia
10	Russian Federation	Colombia	Egypt	Afghanistan	Vietnam
Rank	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
1	Sri Lanka	China (PRC)	Sri Lanka	China (PRC)	Afghanistan
2	China (PRC)	Sri Lanka	China (PRC)	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
3	Iraq	Iraq	Iraq	Afghanistan	China (PRC)
4	Iran	Iran	Pakistan	Zimbabwe	Iraq
5	Indonesia	Pakistan	Iran	Iraq	Iran
6	Egypt	Egypt	Zimbabwe	Pakistan	Zimbabwe
7	Pakistan	Burma	Burma	Iran	Pakistan
8	Zimbabwe	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Burma	Stateless
9	Burma	India	Egypt	Bangladesh	Egypt
10	Nepal	Zimbabwe	Afghanistan	Egypt	Burma

\* Nationality based on country of birth for offshore humanitarian and citizenship for onshore humanitarian

Source: DIAC visa grant statistics

**Figure 1: Program outcomes by component from 1977–78 to 2009–10**



Source: DIAC visa grant statistics

### Outcomes of the 2009–10 Humanitarian Program

In 2009–10 a total of 13 770 visas were granted under the Humanitarian Program.

This included 9236 (67.1 per cent) under the offshore component and 4534 (32.9 per cent) under the onshore component.

Under the offshore component, the highest number of visas granted in 2009–10 was to applicants from the Asia/Pacific (38.6 per cent), followed by the Middle East/South West Asia (31.8 per cent), followed by the Africa region (29.2 per cent) with the remaining visas granted to applicants in Europe and the Americas (0.4 per cent).

Table 2 below shows Humanitarian Program outcomes by component in 2009–10.

The target of 12 per cent for Woman at Risk visas was exceeded in 2009–10 with 806 visas granted to Woman at Risk applicants, about 13.4 per cent of Refugee visas.

The Government continued to demonstrate a commitment to assisting refugees in protracted situations and assisting others in critical need in 2009–10.

For more information on the 2009–10 Humanitarian Program see the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s Annual Report 2009–10, available on the Department’s website at: [www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2009-10](http://www.immi.gov.au/about/reports/annual/2009-10)

**Table 2: Humanitarian Program outcomes by component 2009–10**

Component	Visa Category	Visa Grants
<b>Offshore</b>	Refugee	6003
	SHP	3233
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>9236</b>
<b>Onshore</b>	Permanent Protection	4515
	Permanent Protection (where granted through intervention powers)	0
	SHP (where granted onshore through intervention powers)	11
	Resolution of Status <sup>1</sup>	8
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>4534</b>
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM GRANTS 2009–10</b>		<b>13 770</b>

<sup>1</sup> Only visas granted to persons who have not previously held a Humanitarian visa are counted against the Program, for example children born to Temporary Protection visa holders who are later included in their Resolution of Status visa application.

### The current Program: 2010–11

The Humanitarian Program for 2010–11 has been set 13 750 places which includes:

- 6000 Refugee places
- 7750 other humanitarian places, shared between onshore protection requirements and the offshore SHP.

The main resettlement focus for 2010–11 will continue to be on refugees from the three key regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East and on refugees from protracted situations, such as the Bhutanese in Nepal, and others in critical need.

Vulnerable women and their dependants will again be a priority through the Woman at Risk program. The target for 2010–11 remains at 12 per cent of offshore Refugee visas to be granted to Woman at Risk applicants.



## PRE-DEPARTURE AND SETTLEMENT SERVICES

The resettlement of refugees and others in humanitarian need to Australia is supported by a suite of comprehensive services provided by the Australian Government. These services are critical for supporting new arrivals and enabling active participation in Australian society.

### The Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program

The Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program is provided pre-departure for refugee and humanitarian visa holders preparing for resettlement in Australia. The program is delivered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on behalf of the Department. As well as preparing people for travel, the program provides an initial introduction to aspects of Australia life and culture prior to arrival.

The program is the beginning of the settlement process for people coming to Australia under the Humanitarian Program. It is available to all refugee and humanitarian visa holders aged five and over. The course is delivered over five days to ensure that all topics are covered in sufficient detail and is tailored for delivery to four separate groups – adults, youth, children and pre-literate people. In addition there are Family Day sessions for all family members.

From the beginning of the program in 2003 to the end of December 2010, more than 2100 courses have been held in Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, the Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, assisting over 39 000 people.

The curriculum is designed to give participants confidence and independence starting their new lives in Australia, and is an opportunity for them to meet others making the same journey.



### Pre-Departure Medical Screening (PDMS)

Pre-departure Medical Screening (PDMS) is a health check undertaken within 72 hours of departure for holders of refugee and humanitarian visas. It is primarily to ensure that visa holders are healthy enough to undertake the long flights to Australia ('fit to fly') and that additional support is provided throughout the flight if required.

PDMS will also identify any illness that may need follow-up in Australia soon after arrival and is in addition to mandatory health checks completed prior to the grant of a visa.

## Humanitarian Settlement Services

Pre-departure and settlement services also include Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) program, which provides initial, intensive settlement support to newly-arrived humanitarian clients. The HSS program replaced the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) in April 2011, following an open tender process.

The HSS program delivers four key services—case management, accommodation, local area coordination and an optional volunteer program. Services are delivered through a coordinated case management model. Key features of the new program include: a flexible client-centred approach, focusing on individual settlement needs; greater focus on the particular needs of young people; a new comprehensive onshore orientation program which builds on the messages delivered through AUSCO, and delivers competency-based outcomes to clients; and flexible and innovative approaches for the provision of accommodation services.

Other key services delivered by the Government to people arriving under the Humanitarian Program include:

- The **Settlement Grants Program** which provides organisations with funding to deliver settlement services to newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants for up to five years after arrival.
- The **Adult Migrant English Program** which provides English language tuition for eligible adult permanent migrants.
- The **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)** which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Settlement Framework

The Australian Government is implementing a new Settlement Framework to reinvigorate initial on arrival settlement services within a more coordinated, holistic settlement framework. The Settlement Framework comprises principles and key strategic themes to better align policy, planning and funding of settlement services to achieve the best outcomes for clients of the Department.

These themes include:

- articulating better linkages between migration and settlement programs
- improving our settlement service delivery models
- providing a better evidence base for understanding the settlement needs and outcomes of clients
- improving cross-agency coordination and integrated service delivery and
- identifying the most appropriate settlement location for clients based on their settlement needs and available services.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

UNHCR estimates that as at the end of 2009, there were 983 000 asylum seekers around the world. During 2009–10, there were 8150 Protection visa applications lodged in Australia, and the Department decided a total of 7557 Protection visa applications.<sup>7</sup> When compared to South Africa, who received over 220 000 asylum applications in 2009, Canada, who received 34 000 asylum applications in 2009, and the United Kingdom, who received almost 30 000 asylum applications in this year, Australia received only a small percentage of the world's asylum applications.<sup>8</sup>

Providing protection for some of the world's most vulnerable people, who apply from within Australia and are found to be refugees, reflects Australia's firm commitment to a fair and humane Program which recognises Australia's international obligations arising from the Refugees Convention.

### The Special Humanitarian Program

Since 1996–97, onshore Protection visa grants have been drawn from an annual allocation of visa places shared with the SHP, effectively 'linking' the offshore and onshore components of the Humanitarian Program. For 2010–11 this allocation is set at 7750 visa places.

Applications for immediate family members, that is the spouse or de facto partner, dependent children and parents of minor children who propose the application, are accorded the highest priority in processing of SHP visa applications. This reflects the importance that is placed on family reunion in enabling people to settle well.



<sup>7</sup> Applications decided include first instance decisions and decisions following review tribunal and judicial processes.

<sup>8</sup> *UNHCR 2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons.*

Please note that UNHCR figures are based on a calendar year while Australia's Humanitarian Program year follows the financial year.

Giving priority to immediate family means that there will inevitably be fewer places under the SHP for people with claims of substantial discrimination who are proposed by other relatives in Australia, such as siblings, parents and non-dependent children. This means greater waiting times, of up to several years in some cases, for their visas to be finalised.

In 2009–10, of the 7750 places available places, around 4500 (58 per cent) were used for onshore Protection visas and 3250 places (42 per cent) were used for SHP applicants. SHP applicants included immediate family of onshore Protection visa holders and others who were assessed on the basis of their claims. The higher proportion of claims-based applicants reflects the residual pipeline of cases under process. In 2011–12 and beyond the proportion of immediate family applications is expected to increase.



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With thanks to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the National Archives of Australia for photos used in this information paper.