

# Humanitarian Program

## Australia's Contribution to the System of International Protection

Australia is an active and cooperative participant in the management of humanitarian crises and the orderly resolution of refugee situations. Australia expresses its commitment to refugees and the system of international protection by way of its aid program, and support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A key element of this commitment is Australia's Humanitarian Program which provides protection to refugees and others of concern, and opportunities for the orderly delivery of resettlement as a durable solution. The Humanitarian Program contributes to this commitment in two ways:

- First, under the onshore protection component, the program provides a practical solution for people already in Australia who engage Australia's protection obligations under the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.
- Second, the offshore resettlement component provides resettlement places in Australia as a durable solution to the plight of refugees and other people of concern who are in greatest need of resettlement. The resettlement component of the program goes beyond any international obligations and reflects Australia's desire to assist persons around the world in greatest need of resettlement. Australia has one of the largest of just ten regular, formal humanitarian resettlement programs in the world.

## Australia's Humanitarian Program

Australia's Humanitarian Program comprises two components, an offshore resettlement component and an onshore protection component

### Onshore Protection

The onshore component comprises two types of Protection Visas:

- Permanent Protection Visa (PPV - subclass 866) for people who arrive in Australia on a temporary visa, lodge an application for protection and are subsequently found to engage Australia's protection obligations; and
- Temporary Protection Visa (TPV - subclass 785) for people who arrive in Australia unlawfully, lodge applications for protection and are subsequently found to engage Australia's protection obligations.

**Fig. 2-20: Humanitarian Program Outcomes:  
Visas Granted 1993–94 to 2002–03**

Category	93–94	94–95	95–96	96–97	97–98	98–99	99–00	00–01	01–02	02–03
Refugee	4,300	3,990	4,640	3,330	4,010	3,990	3,800	4,000	4,160	4,380 <sup>(f)</sup>
Special Humanitarian Program	2,500	3,680	3,500	2,580	4,640	4,350	3,050	3,120	4,260	7,280
Special Assistance Category	5,800	5,500	6,910	3,730	1,820	1,190	650	880	40	—
Onshore Humanitarian <sup>(a)</sup>	100	50	—	—	—	—	—	160	10	—
Onshore Refugees <sup>(b)</sup>	1,790	1,430	1,200	2,250	1,590	1,830	2,460	5,580	3,890	870
Total Grants <sup>(c)</sup>	14,490	14,700	16,250 <sup>(d)</sup>	11,900	12,060	11,360	9,960 <sup>(e)</sup>	13,730	12,350	12,530

(a) Persons granted permanent residence status on humanitarian grounds on the basis of applications lodged prior to December 1989, or granted Temporary Humanitarian Concerns (subclass 786) visas.

(b) Prior to 1996–97, Onshore Refugees were not counted against the Humanitarian Program.

(c) Note that figures have been rounded and thus totals may not be the exact sum of components.

(d) These totals reflect the decision to bring forward, into 1995–96, 2,000 places from the 1996–97 Program.

(e) In addition to this number, 5,900 Safe Haven visas were granted in 1999–00 comprising 4,000 grants to Kosovars offshore and 1,900 to East Timorese onshore.

(f) 498 places were brought forward from the 2003–04 program year to allow grant of refugee visas which had reached finalisation.

Source Data: IMIRS

## Offshore Program

There are two categories of permanent visas and two categories of temporary visas under the offshore component of the Humanitarian Program.

### Permanent Category:

- Refugee: for people who are subject to persecution and have been identified in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as in need of resettlement.
- Special Humanitarian Program (SHP): for people who have suffered substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights. The SHP enables the resettlement of persons in Australia who, while not refugees, are in humanitarian need. People applying under the SHP must demonstrate some connection with Australia. Their applications must be supported by a formal proposal from a permanent resident or a citizen of Australia or body operating in Australia.

### Temporary Category:

The Secondary Movement Category is for people who are subject to persecution or substantial discrimination in their home country and who move beyond the country of first asylum to seek asylum in a country of their choice. This category was introduced in September 2001 along with other changes intended to deter non-citizens from entering Australia without a visa to discourage refugees from abandoning or bypassing protection in another country in order to seek protection in another country in order to seek protection in Australia. It comprises two sub-categories:

- Secondary Movement Relocation: offers a temporary visa to people who have moved from a safe first country of asylum to a third country and undergo processing for resettlement from there.
- Secondary Movement Offshore Entry: offers a temporary visa to persons who arrived unlawfully in Australia at certain places called 'offshore excised places'. These places have been excluded from the Australian migration zone for the purposes of limiting people who arrive at these places from making a valid visa application.

## Size of the Humanitarian Program

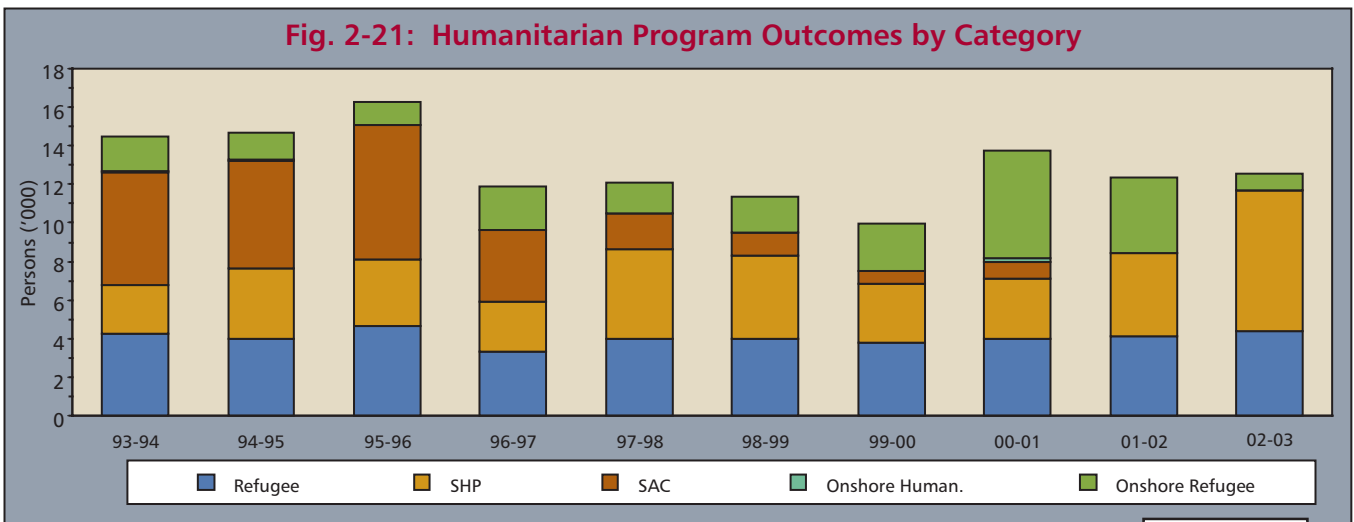
13,223 places were available at the commencement of the 2002–03 program year. A total of 12,525 visas were granted by 30 June 2003. The table below provides a breakdown of grants in 2002–03.

For the past several years the Humanitarian Program has been maintained at 12,000 new places each year based on consultations with the Australian community, UNHCR's assessment of global resettlement needs and taking into account Australia's capacity to sustain refugees. The costs of sustaining refugees include the provision of a generous suite of settlement services to help refugees successfully settle into Australian society.

The program is characterised by flexibility which ensures that Australia's contribution to humanitarian resettlement is maximised. This means that:

- Where places in one program year are not used, those places can be rolled over into the following program year.
- Places can also be moved between the offshore and onshore components of the program as required - the significant reduction in the places required onshore in 2002–03 resulted in greater numbers of Special Humanitarian Program places being available under the offshore component.
- Visas issued to applicants but not used for entry to Australia may be re-allocated in the following program year to ensure that all places under the program are fully utilised, thus ensuring that no places under the program are wasted.
- Additionally, where resettlement places in excess of those available in a program year are required, the Minister may bring forward places from future program years.

Fig. 2-21: Humanitarian Program Outcomes by Category



Source Data: IMIRS

## ***New Initiatives in 2002–03***

The Department has commenced two projects in 2003 with the aim of enhancing the delivery of the Special Humanitarian Program.

### ***SHP Travel Pilot***

Under the SHP, entrants are required to be proposed by a permanent resident or citizen of Australia or a body operating in Australia. The proposer is expected to assist the applicant to meet the medical costs associated with visa grant, and to meet the entrant's travel costs to Australia.

Some newly arrived proposers from emerging communities have difficulty in assisting the entrants to meet these costs. Visa processing times grow as applicants cannot undertake their medicals when advised, and their travel to Australia can be delayed. The financial drain that this creates can also affect the capacity of proposers to meet their obligations to assist entrants with accommodation and settlement support on their arrival. The inability of proposers to meet these obligations, in particular the payment of travel costs, impacts on the integrity, predictability and successful delivery of the Humanitarian Program.

A scoping exercise is currently under way aimed at attracting greater community and corporate sector funding to support Special Humanitarian Program entrants' travel costs.

### ***Global Processing - SHP Pilot Project in Australia***

Currently, all processing of Humanitarian visas is undertaken by Australian overseas missions. From 1 July 2003, the NSW State Office, DIMIA, has commenced a pilot project to part-process SHP applications that are lodged in Nairobi, Kenya between 1 April and 31 December 2003. The pilot will identify the benefits for DIMIA and clients from processing aspects of these applications in Australia. If successful, the arrangements may later expand to include applications from other countries.

The pilot will only include SHP applications with an Australian proposer, which are lodged with the Nairobi post. All other applications will continue to be processed overseas. It is hoped that the pilot will achieve better liaison with Australian proposers, and improve processing times and outcomes.

## ***Major Global Developments Impacting on Australia's Humanitarian Program in 2003–04 and Outyears***

The current resettlement environment is one characterised by:

- A decline in the global Refugee population from 12 million at the beginning of 2002 to 10.4 million at the end of June 2003;
- Shifts in regional priorities for resettlement due to a continued reduction in the resettlement need in the former Yugoslavia and the prospects of resolution of protracted Afghan and Iraqi caseloads, thus allowing for the focus of the program on protracted and emerging caseloads such as those in Africa; and
- The success of border protection measures which have acted as a deterrent to unauthorised arrivals thus increasing the number of places available under the offshore component of the program.

# Humanitarian Program (Offshore)

## Offshore Humanitarian Program Outcomes

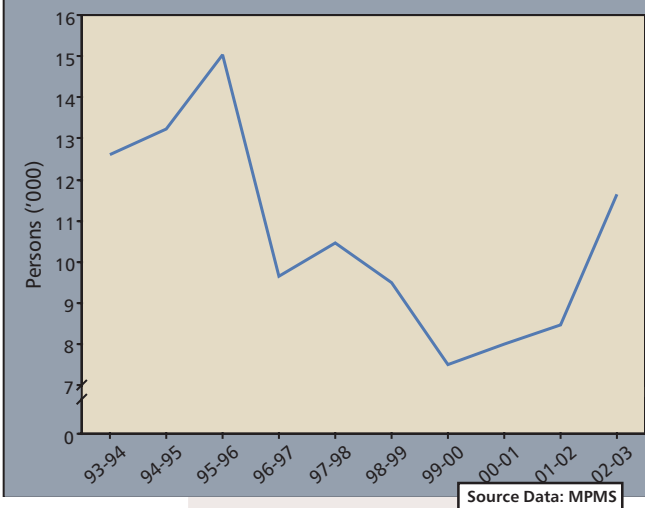
11,656 resettlement visas were granted offshore comprising:

- 4,376 Refugee grants, (including 311 persons resettled from the offshore processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea); and
- 7,280 Special Humanitarian Program grants.

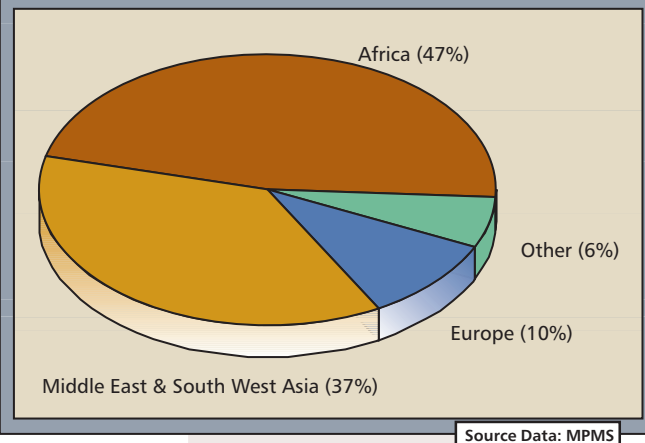
The 11,656 offshore grants in 2002–03 constituted an increase of 38 per cent over the 8,458 offshore grants in 2001–02 and represents the highest number of offshore grants in the last five years.

- this increase in grants was achieved despite the challenges in operational environment overseas as a result of disruptions to processing due to post closures, security concerns and travel restrictions.

**Fig. 2-22: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants**



**Fig. 2-23: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants by Region, 2002–03**



The annual target for the Woman at Risk subcategory of the Refugee component is set at 10.5 per cent of Refugee places. In 2002–03 this target was exceeded with 11.5 per cent (504 visas) being granted in the Woman at Risk subcategory, representing the highest number of grants in one year in the last five years.

## Source Regions

In line with regional priorities as recommended by the UNHCR, priority was given to resettlement of people from Africa, the Middle East and South West Asia in 2002–03. The regional composition was as follows:

- Africa - 47 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 16 percentage points of the total offshore program in comparison with 2001–02);
- Middle East and South West Asia - 37 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 5 percentage points of the total offshore program in comparison with 2001–02);
- Europe - 10 per cent of total offshore grants (a reduction of 22 percentage points of the total offshore program in comparison with 2001–02).

The major source countries by birthplace were Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Iran and Liberia.

## Processing Times

Offshore visa grant times for both Refugee and SHP categories continued to improve through the year. In 2002-03, on average, it took 38 weeks to grant 75 per cent of Refugee visas and an average of 86 weeks to grant 75 per cent of Special Humanitarian Program visas. By comparison, in 2001-02, it took 56 weeks to grant 75 per cent of Refugee visas and an average of 107 weeks to grant 75 per cent of Special Humanitarian Program visas.

In 2002–03, a total of 63,073 applications were made offshore, an increase of 9,320 applications in comparison with 2001–02.

In 2002–03, applications from 65,750 persons were finalised, in comparison with 66,296 in 2001–02. This marginal decrease in finalisations in 2002–03 can be attributed to the fact that the primary focus was on processing a higher number of applications offshore.

# Humanitarian Program (Onshore)

## Onshore Humanitarian Outcomes

There were 8,247 protection visa decisions made in 2002–03 and a total of 866 Protection visa grants in the year. In comparison, there were 11,108 Protection visa decisions and a total of 3,885 Protection visas granted in 2001–02. The reduction in 2002–03 reflects a decline in the available workload resulting both from the cessation of unauthorised boat arrivals and a decline in the number of applications made by people in the community.

Of the 866 Protection visas granted in 2002–03, 250 (29 per cent) were Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). By comparison, of the 3,885 Protection visa grants in 2001–02, 81 per cent (3,137 visas) were TPVs, reflecting the large number of unauthorised boat arrivals processed in that program year. Of the remaining onshore visa grants, 616 were Permanent Protection Visas (PPVs).

Additionally, 3 Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas were granted onshore in 2002–03.

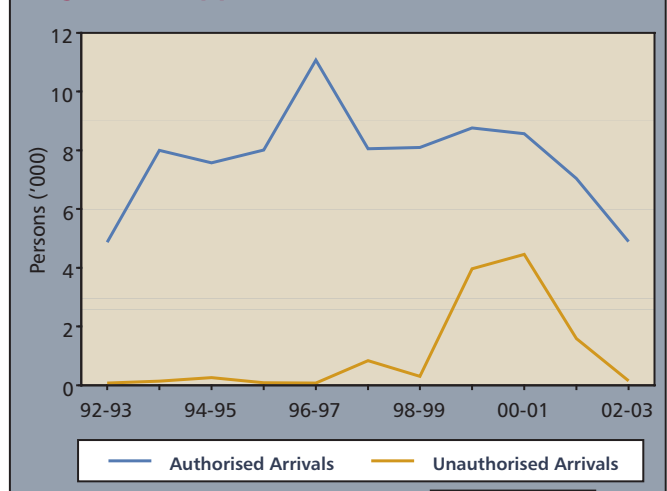
## Processing Times

In 2002–03, the Department met or exceeded its timeliness targets for decision making for applications from both those in the community and those in detention. Attention was given to streamlining onshore protection processing, strengthening arrangements for decision-maker training, country information and fraud checking to ensure speedy and robust decision-making.

For applicants in the community, the target is that 80 per cent receive a decision within 90 days. Against this, the Department finalised 82 per cent in 2002–03 within the target time of 90 days.

For applicants in detention, the target is that 60 per cent receive a decision within 42 days. Against this, the Department finalised 81 per cent within the target time.

Fig. 2-24: Applications for Protection Visas



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-25: Protection Visas Applications by Citizenship, 2002–03

PRC	996
India	604
Indonesia	356
Thailand	262
Fiji	242
Rep of Korea	230
Malaysia	224
Sri Lanka	175
Bangladesh	151
Lebanon	101
Other	1,695
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,036</b>

Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-26: Protection Visa Grants by Citizenship, 2002–03

Iraq	120
Iran	76
Sri Lanka	71
Afghanistan	62
PRC	48
Burma	46
Russian Federation	42
Colombia	41
Turkey	34
Egypt	30
Other	296
<b>Total</b>	<b>866</b>

Source Data: IMIRS