

Humanitarian Program

Australia's Contribution to the System of International Protection

Australia is a committed participant in the system of international protection in which countries choose to share responsibility to protect and find orderly resolution for the plight of refugees.

A key element of this commitment is Australia's Humanitarian Program, which provides resettlement to persons overseas who are in the greatest need of this durable solution and protection to persons who arrive in Australia and are in need of that protection.

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 is one of only ten countries that operate an annual dedicated resettlement program and consistently ranks in the top three in the numbers of persons resettled. In 2003, Australia ranked second after the US in the numbers of persons resettled.

History of the Humanitarian Program

Although Australia has a long history of resettling refugees and displaced persons, a regular and planned humanitarian component of the Migration Program did not commence until 1977-78.

The first Humanitarian Programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s were dominated by Indochinese, although there was also a significant East European component. Programs were large, with 21,917 persons arriving under the Humanitarian Program in 1981-82. Almost all were assisted refugees. The Global Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) was not introduced until late 1981.

By the second half of the 1980s, the Humanitarian Program had reduced, averaging 11,000 - 12,000 per year. Although the program was still dominated by Indochinese, it was more diverse with over 40 nationalities represented including significant Latin/Central American and Middle Eastern caseloads. SHP had become the largest category of the program.

In 1991, the Special Assistance Category (SAC) was introduced to assist specific groups of individuals with close links to Australia who, while subject to severe hardship, did not fit the traditional humanitarian categories. The SACs were all closed by 2001.

Australia's Humanitarian Program

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

**Fig. 2-19: Humanitarian Program Outcomes:
Visas Granted 1994-95 to 2003-04**

Category	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04
Refugee	3,990	4,640	3,330	4,010	3,990	3,800	4,000	4,160	4,380 ^(f)	4,130
Special Humanitarian Program	3,680	3,500	2,580	4,640	4,350	3,050	3,120	4,260	7,280	7,670
Special Assistance Category	5,500	6,910	3,730	1,820	1,190	650	880	40	—	—
Onshore Humanitarian ^(a)	50	—	—	—	—	—	160	10	—	—
Onshore Refugees ^(b)	1,430	1,200	2,250	1,590	1,830	2,460	5,580	3,890	870	2,050 ^(g)
Total Grants^(c)	14,700	16,250^(d)	11,900	12,060	11,360	9,960^(e)	13,730	12,350	12,530	13,850

(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.

(g) Includes 1,228 visa granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

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.

Offshore Resettlement

The offshore component has three categories: the Refugee category, the SHP and the Secondary Movement category.

The Refugee category assists people who are subject to persecution in their home country and have been identified in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as in need of resettlement.

The SHP assists people who have suffered substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. 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.

The Secondary Movement category is for people who are subject to persecution or substantial discrimination in their home country and who move beyond their country of first asylum to seek asylum in a country of their choice.

Humanitarian Program Performance - 2003-04

12,891 places were available at the commencement of the 2003-04 program year. A total of 13,851 visas were granted by 30 June 2004. This is the first time in five years that there was no carry-over of unused places into the following year. Figure 2-21 provides a breakdown of grants in 2003-04. The 13,851 grants in 2003-04 represents the highest number of grants under the Humanitarian Program in eight years.

Size of the Humanitarian Program

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.

In 2004-05, the size of the Humanitarian Program has been increased to 13,000 new places and within it the Refugee category to 6,000 places, a 50 per cent increase in Refugee places.

The size of the Refugee category in 2004-05 is the largest it has been since 1985-86.

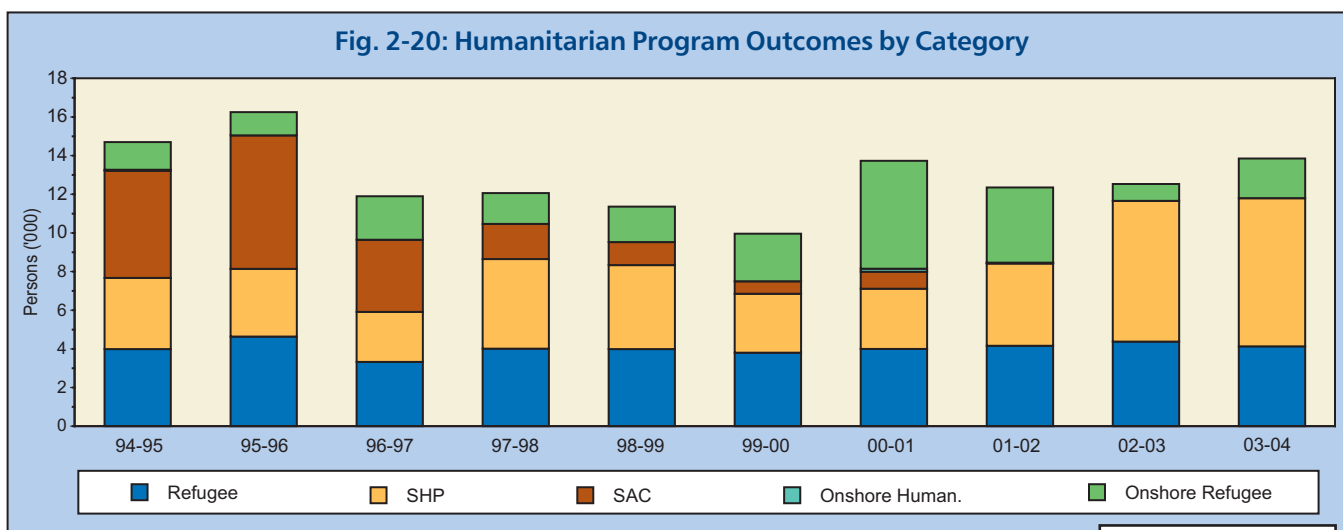
The program increase has been possible as a result of the significant decrease in unauthorised arrivals and the consequent reduction in onshore protection grants. This has allowed the Government to re-invest in the offshore Humanitarian Program thereby re-focusing the program on those in the greatest relative need of resettlement.

The program will continue to be flexible, thus ensuring 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;
- 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. 2-20: Humanitarian Program Outcomes by Category



Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Fig. 2-21: Humanitarian Program Outcomes 2003–04

Offshore	Refugee	4,134
	SHP	7,668
	Subtotal	11,802
Onshore	TPV	185
	PPV	603
	THCV ¹	2
	Onshore SHP ²	1,259
	Subtotal	2,049
Program Total		13,851

¹ Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas granted to Safe Haven visa holders who required medical treatment in Australia.

² Includes 1,228 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

Source Data: MPMS and IMIRS

Initiatives to Enhance the Delivery of the Humanitarian Program in 2004-05

As part of the 2004-05 Budget, two initiatives specifically cater to enhancing the delivery of the SHP category of the offshore program:

- the Australian Government will fully fund from 11 May 2004 the medical examination costs of SHP entrants; and
- it will provide \$2.5 million as base capital to assist in the establishment of a national no-interest community-based loans scheme to help SHP proposers to meet travel costs associated with bringing SHP entrants to Australia.

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, to meet the entrant's travel costs to Australia and assist with support after arrival. The inability of proposers to meet these commitments, in particular the payment of medicals and travel, impacts on the integrity, predicability and successful delivery of the Humanitarian Program.

Almost 75 per cent of SHP places were granted to persons from Africa in 2003-04 and this trend is expected to continue in 2004-05 and beyond. These communities in Australia do not have the resources that previous better established SHP communities had. The initiatives are designed to alleviate some of the financial pressures that SHP entrants and proposers face.

Repatriation of SHP processing to Australia

Traditionally, all offshore humanitarian applications have been processed at Australian overseas missions. In 2004, a successful pilot with DIMIA's NSW Office processing SHP applications lodged in Nairobi was expanded to cover applicants in Cairo. An evaluation on the impact of these pilots on client service found that onshore processing significantly addressed processing and communication issues for proposers thus improving client service. Proposers and community groups acknowledged a feeling of greater collaboration and connection with the Department.

From 1 September 2004, SHP applications that would have been lodged at Nairobi and Cairo can now be lodged in Sydney.

Humanitarian Program (Offshore)

Offshore Humanitarian Program Performance

In 2003-04, 11,802 resettlement visas were granted offshore comprising:

- 4,134 Refugee visas, (including 90 persons resettled from the offshore processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea): and
- 7,668 SHP visas.

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 2003-04. The regional composition was as follows:

- Africa – 70.6 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 23 per cent of the total offshore program in comparison with 2002-03);
- Middle East and South West Asia – 24.4 per cent of total offshore grants (a decrease of 10 percent of the total offshore program in comparison with 2002-03);
- Europe – 3 per cent of total offshore grants (a reduction of 7 per cent of the total offshore program in comparison with 2002-03); and
- Asia and America – 2 per cent of total offshore grants.

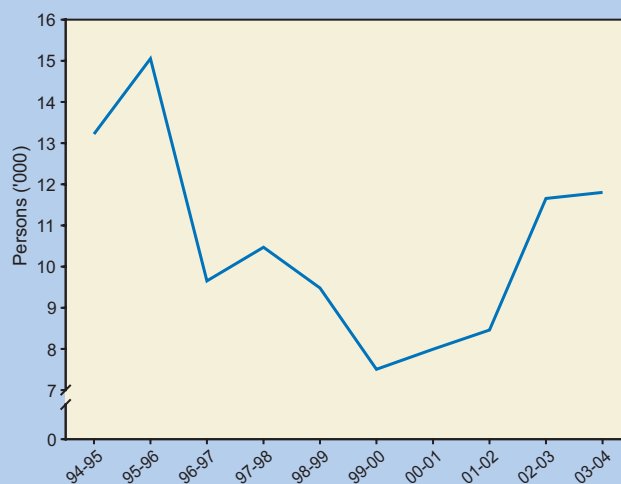
Processing Times

Processing times continued to reduce during 2003-04 with 75 per cent of applications being finalised within 40 weeks. In 2002-03, it took 50 weeks to finalise 75 per cent of all applications.

The trend in the reduction of visa grant times also continued during 2003-04 with 75 per cent of offshore visa grants being processed in 57 weeks. In 2002-03, it took 64 weeks to grant 75 per cent of offshore visas and 101 weeks in 2001-02.

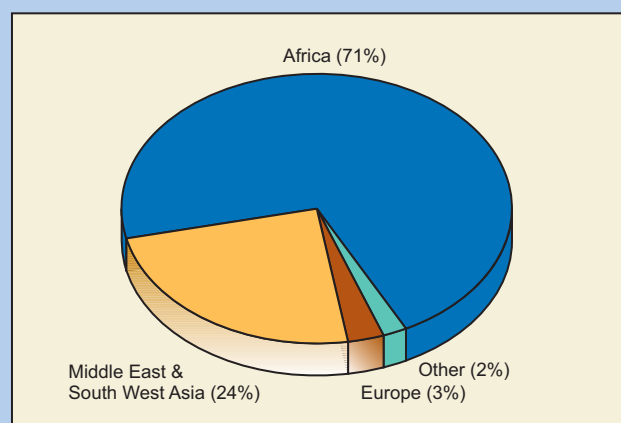
The number of applications finalised during 2003-04 also increased to 67,081 in comparison to 65,750 finalised during 2002-03.

Fig. 2-22: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants



Source Data: MPMS

Fig. 2-23: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants by Region 2003-04



Source Data: MPMS

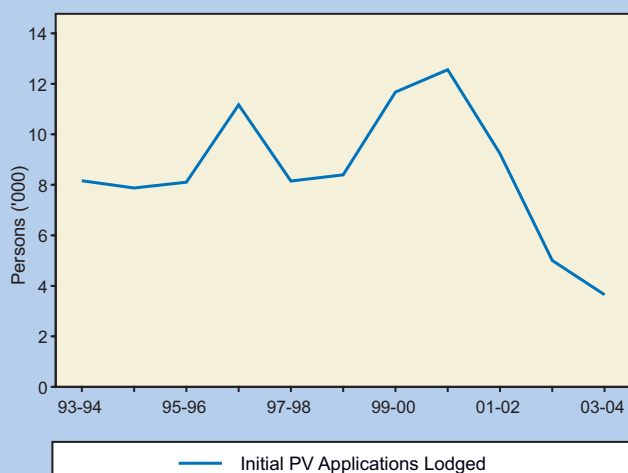
Fig. 2-24: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants by Country of Birth 2003-04

Sudan	6,147
Iraq	1,400
Afghanistan	933
Ethiopia	690
Iran	375
Liberia	368
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	322
Sierra Leone	287
Congo	226
Somalia	185
Other	869
Total	11,802

Source Data: MPMS

Humanitarian Program (Onshore)

Fig. 2-25: Initial Applications for Protection Visas



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-26: Protection Visa Applications by Citizenship 2003-04

PRC	728
India	403
Malaysia	208
Indonesia	193
Iraq	144
Fiji	125
Republic of Korea	118
Sri Lanka	118
Bangladesh	107
Viet Nam	99
Other	1,405
Total	3,648

Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-27: Protection Visa Grants by Citizenship 2003-04

Iran	106
PRC	77
Iraq	53
Afghanistan	41
Russian Federation	36
Colombia	32
Bangladesh	30
Sri Lanka	30
Zimbabwe	27
Other	356
Total	788

Source Data: IMIRS

Onshore Humanitarian Program Performance

There were 6,299 Protection visa finalisation decisions made in 2003-04 and a total of 788 initial Protection visa grants in the year. In comparison, there were 8,296 Protection visa finalisation decisions and a total of 897 initial Protection visas granted in 2002-03. The reduction in finalisations in 2003-04 reflects a decline in the available workload resulting both from very low numbers of unauthorised boat arrivals and a decline in the number of applications made by people in the community. During 2003-04, the Department moved increasingly to processing of further applications from Temporary Protection visa holders which in the early stages has been a resource intensive caseload.

Of the 788 initial Protection visas granted in 2003-04, 185 (23 per cent) were TPVs and 603 (77 per cent) were PPVs. By comparison, of the 897 initial Protection visas granted in 2002-03, 281 (31 per cent) were TPVs and 616 (69 per cent) were PPVs.

Additionally, two Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas were granted onshore in 2003-04.

Processing Times

The Department maintained a satisfactory outcome against its timeliness target for decision making for community based initial applicants and exceeded its timeliness target for decision making for those in detention. Attention has continued to be 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 of lodgement, where there are not factors outside DIMIA's control which prevent finalisation. Against this, the Department finalised 78.8 per cent in 2003-04 within the target time of 90 days.

For applicants in detention, the target is that 60 per cent receive a decision within 42 days of lodgement, where there are not factors outside DIMIA's control which prevent finalisation. Against this, the Department finalised 88.4 per cent within the target time.

New Measures for TPV and THV Holders

On 27 August 2004, new measures for TPV and temporary offshore humanitarian (THV) visa holders commenced. These included:

- A reintegration assistance package to assist those in Australia who wish to return to their home country to re-establish themselves;
- A 'Return Pending' visa (RPV) to provide a further 18 months stay for those who are found to no longer be owed protection, and have no other lawful basis to remain, to make arrangements to return home; and
- Removal of barriers to apply for a range of non-humanitarian onshore visas.

The new measures are consistent with Australia's strong border control policies and the understanding that those who are found to no longer be owed protection should depart Australia unless they have some other lawful basis to remain. The provision of the Reintegration Assistance Package and the RPV acknowledges that Australia has previously found TPV and THV holders to be owed protection, that they have spent time in the community and need time and support to make arrangements to return home.

These changes also acknowledge that some of these people have made strong contributions to Australia, particularly in regional areas, or have established close links with Australians.

These new measures apply to the following temporary visas in the humanitarian program:

- Secondary Movement Offshore Entry (Temporary) Subclass 447;
- Secondary Movement Relocation (Temporary) Subclass 451; and
- Temporary Protection Visa Subclass 785.

The RPV is available to former, current and future TPV and THV holders. Eligibility to apply for non-humanitarian visas and the Reintegration Assistance Package is restricted to current and former TPV and THV holders who were in Australia when the regulations commenced on 27 August 2004 and those in this group who are subsequently granted a RPV.

TPV and THV holders who are found to be owed further protection by Australia will continue to receive it, either on a permanent or temporary basis.