

# Humanitarian Programme

## 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 Programme, which provides resettlement to persons overseas who are in the greatest need of this durable solution, as well as protection to persons who arrive in Australia and are in need of that protection.

The resettlement component of the programme 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 just ten countries operating a well established and successful resettlement programme, and consistently ranks within the top three countries in terms of the number of persons resettled.

## History of the Humanitarian Programme

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

The first Humanitarian Programmes in the late 1970s and early 1980s were dominated by Indochinese, although there was also a significant East European component. Programmes were large,

with 21,917 persons arriving under the Humanitarian Programme 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 Programme had shrunk, averaging 11,000 to 12,000 per year. Although the programme 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 programme.

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 SAC was closed by 2001.

## Australia's Humanitarian Programme

### Onshore Protection

The onshore component comprises two types of Protection visas:

- Permanent Protection Visa (PPV) 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) for people who arrive in Australia unlawfully, lodge applications for protection and are subsequently found to engage Australia's protection obligations.

**Fig. 2-21: Humanitarian Programme Outcomes:  
Visas Granted 1996–97 to 2005–06**

Category	96–97	97–98	98–99	99–00	00–01	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05	05–06
Refugee	3,330	4,010	3,990	3,800	4,000	4,160	4,380 <sup>(e)</sup>	4,130	5,510	6,020
Special Humanitarian Programme	2,580	4,640	4,350	3,050	3,120	4,260	7,280	7,670	6,580	6,740
Special Assistance Category	3,730	1,820	1,190	650	880	40	—	—	—	—
Onshore Humanitarian <sup>(a)</sup>	—	—	—	—	160	10	—	—	190 <sup>(g)</sup>	110 <sup>(i)</sup>
Onshore Refugees <sup>(b)</sup>	2,250	1,590	1,830	2,460	5,580	3,890	870	2,050 <sup>(f)</sup>	890 <sup>(h)</sup>	1,270 <sup>(j)</sup>
<b>Total Grants<sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>11,900</b>	<b>12,060</b>	<b>11,360</b>	<b>9,960<sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>13,730</b>	<b>12,350</b>	<b>12,530</b>	<b>13,850</b>	<b>13,180</b>	<b>14,140</b>

(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 Programme.

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

(d) 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.

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

(f) Includes 1,230 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

(g) Includes 150 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

(h) Comprises 230 initial temporary protection visas and 660 permanent protection visas.

(i) Includes 50 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

(j) Comprises 280 initial temporary protection visas and 990 permanent protection visas.

Source Data: MPMS, ICSE and IMIRS

## Offshore Resettlement

The offshore component has three categories:

- the Refugee category;
- the Special Humanitarian Program (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 an organisation operating in Australia.

The Secondary Movement category operates 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.

### Size of the Humanitarian Programme

For a number of years the Humanitarian Programme was maintained at 12,000 new places each year. In 2004–05 the programme increased to 13,000 new places. The programme expansion included a 50 per cent increase in the Refugee component from 4,000 to 6,000 places, making the Refugee component the largest since 1985–86. The programme was maintained at 13,000 new places in 2005–06.

The programme increase in 2004–05 was the result of the significant

decrease in unauthorised arrivals and the consequent reduction in onshore protection grants. This allowed the government to re-invest in the offshore Humanitarian Programme thereby re-focusing the programme on those in the greatest relative need of resettlement.

The programme will continue to be flexible, thus ensuring that Australia’s contribution to humanitarian resettlement is maximised. This means that:

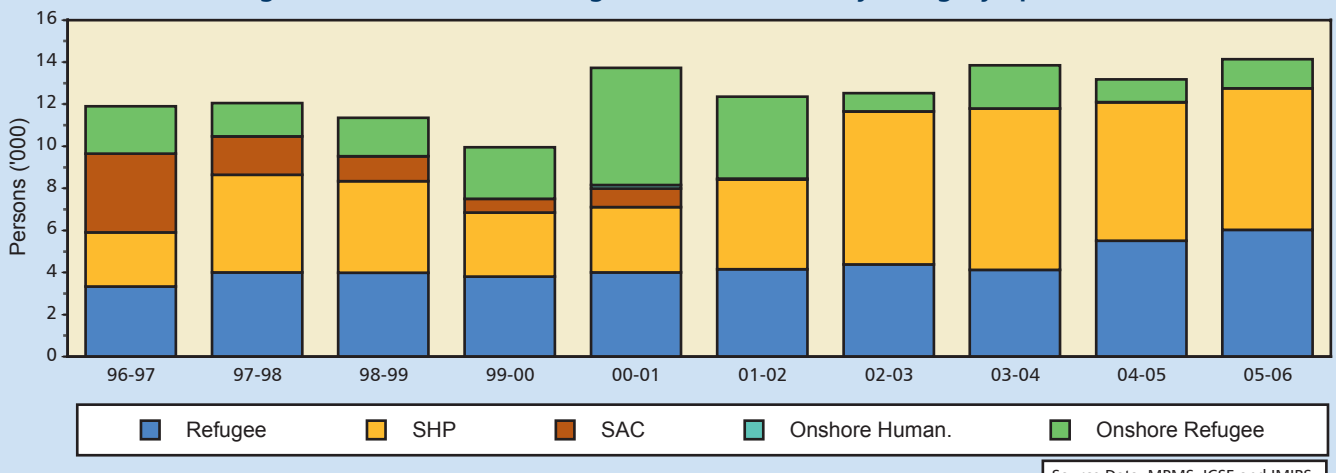
- where places in one programme year are not used, those places can be rolled over into the following programme year;
- places can also be moved between the offshore and onshore components of the programme as required;
- visas issued to applicants but not used for entry to Australia may be re-allocated in the following programme year to ensure that all places under the programme are fully utilised, thus ensuring that no places under the programme are wasted; and
- where resettlement places in excess of those available in a programme year are required, the Minister may bring forward places from future programme years.

### Humanitarian Programme Performance - 2005–06

The 2005–06 Humanitarian Programme was fully delivered through programme flexibility, allowing places to be brought forward or carried over from one year to another. While 13,000 new places were made available to the 2005–06 programme, an additional 128 places were re-credited from previous programme years as a result of TPV departures and non-usage of offshore visa grants and 789 places were brought forward from 2005–06 to the previous programme year to meet demand in 2004–05. This resulted in 12,339 places available for use at the commencement of the 2005–06 programme.

At the end of 2005–06, a total of 14,144 visas were granted. The additional 1,805 visas were brought forward from the 2006–07 programme to cater for the increased demand for places. This is

Fig. 2-22: Humanitarian Programme Outcomes by Category update



Source Data: MPMS, ICSE and IMIRS

the third time in seven years that there was no carry-over of unused places into the following year. The 14,144 grants in 2005–06 represents the highest number of grants under the Humanitarian Programme in ten years and the offshore component, with 12,758 grants, is the highest offshore outcome over the same period. 995 Woman at Risk visas were granted in 2005–06 which is the highest outcome since this category was introduced in 1989.

### Humanitarian Programme 2006–07

In 2006–07, the size of the Humanitarian Programme has been maintained at 13,000 new places comprising 6,000 places within the Refugee category, and 7,000 for Special Humanitarian Program and Onshore Protection places. The offshore programme continues to focus on the Africa region, the Middle East and South West Asia region and an increased focus on the Asia region.

### Initiatives to enhance the delivery of the Humanitarian Programme in 2006–07

In 2005–06, the government expanded upon a number of initiatives from 2004–05 aimed at enhancing programme delivery and improving the settlement prospects of Humanitarian visa holders. These initiatives included:

- The continued delivery of the Australian Cultural Orientation programme (AUSCO), delivering 304 courses, at a cost of \$783,272. New initiatives within the programme included youth and pre-literate programmes in Thailand and Iran respectively. A global tender was released in March 2006, with a new contract finalised on 1 September 2006;
- Enhancing the capacity of the UNHCR to refer suitable numbers of refugees for resettlement in Australia through the provision of \$735,000 for referral projects;
- Continued government funding of medical assessment costs for all Humanitarian entrants; and
- Working with IOM to increase the number of visa holders assisted to travel to Australia through the government funded No Interest Loan Scheme.

In addition, in order to improve the health outcomes for Humanitarian entrants, the government initiated Pre-departure Medical Screening (PDMS) in August 2005 for Refugee and SHP visa holders departing East and West African countries for Australia. PDMS provides for both identification, and where appropriate, immediate medical treatment before travel to ensure that entrants are medically fit to travel to Australia. It allows for the identification of medical issues that may arise in the period between medical checks undertaken prior to visa grant and the time of travel. It also ensures access to required medical assistance, as required, as soon as possible upon arrival in Australia.

The service was extended to North Africa and Thailand in April 2006.

**Fig. 2-23: Humanitarian Programme Outcomes 2005–06**

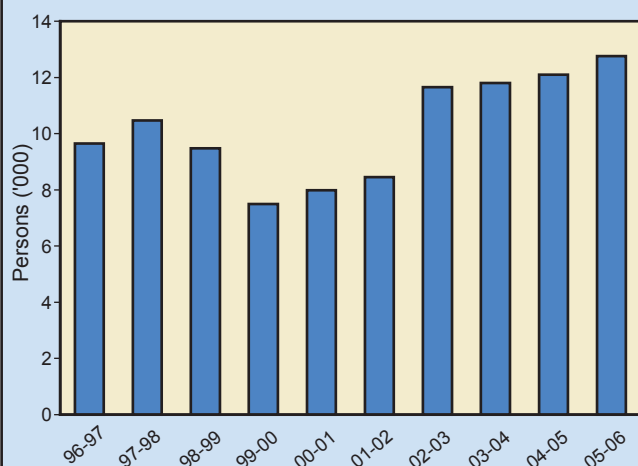
Offshore	Refugee	6,020
	SHP	6,740
	Subtotal	12,760
Onshore	TPV	280
	PPV	1000
	THCV <sup>1</sup>	10
	Onshore SHP <sup>2</sup>	100
	Subtotal	1,390
<b>Programme Total</b>		<b>14,140</b>

<sup>1</sup> Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas granted to Safe Haven visa holders who required medical treatment in Australia.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes 46 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

Source Data: MPMS, ICSE and IMIRS

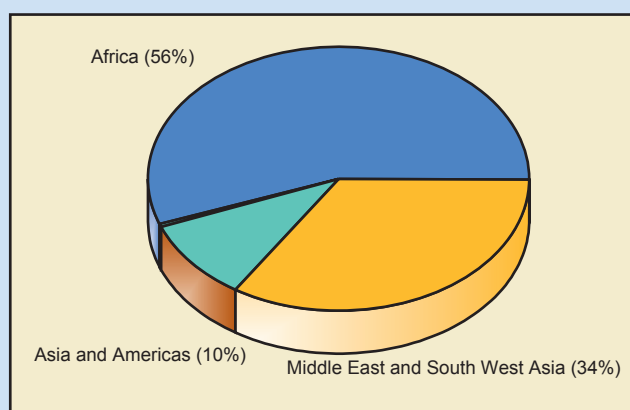
# Humanitarian Programme (Offshore)

**Fig. 2-24: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants**



Source Data: MPMS and ICSE

**Fig. 2-25: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants by Region**



Source Data: MPMS and ICSE

**Fig. 2-26: Offshore Humanitarian Visa Grants by Country of Birth 2005-06**

Sudan	3,726
Iraq	2,150
Afghanistan	1,799
Burma (Myanmar)	1,118
Liberia	888
Burundi	740
Sierra Leone	460
Congo (DRC)	363
Eritrea	274
Iran	232
Others	1,008
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,758</b>

Source Data: MPMS and ICSE

## Offshore Humanitarian Programme Performance

In 2005-06, 12,758 resettlement visas were granted offshore comprising:

- 6,022 Refugee visas, (including 18 persons resettled from the offshore processing centre in Nauru); and
- 6,736 SHP visas.

The 2005-06 outcome represents the highest level of resettlement visas granted offshore since 1995-96.

## 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.

2005-06 visa grants by source regions are as follows:

- Africa – 55.7 per cent of total offshore grants (a decrease of 14.5 percentage points compared to the 2004-05 offshore outcome);
- Middle East and South West Asia – 34.0 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 7.7 percentage points of the total offshore programme in comparison with 2004-05);
- Asia and America – 9.9 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 6.5 percentage points compared to the 2004-05 offshore outcomes); and
- Europe – 0.4 per cent of total offshore grants (a small increase of 0.3 percentage points of the total offshore programme in comparison with 2004-05).

## Processing Times

Finalisation times in 2005-06 continued to improve, with 75 per cent of applications being finalised within 32 weeks compared to 42 weeks in 2004-05.

On average, offshore visa grants during 2005-06 took 50 weeks. The average visa grant times over the past four years fluctuated between 38 and 52 weeks. This is primarily due to external factors outside the department's control.

There were 90,678 applications finalised during 2005-06, which is 20.5 per cent less than the 114,060 applications finalised in 2004-05.

# Humanitarian Programme (Onshore)

## Onshore Humanitarian Programme Performance

There were 8,226 protection visa finalisation decisions in 2005–06 and a total of 5,215 protection visas granted following primary, review or ministerial intervention decisions. These figures represent similar activity to 2004–05. In that year there were 8,278 protection visa finalisations and a total of 4,601 protection visa grants. The number of finalisations and grants in 2005–06 reflects the finalisation of the bulk of further protection visa applications from Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) and offshore Temporary Humanitarian Visa (THV) holders. In 2005–06 there were 3,300 initial protection visa applications lodged, comparable to the level of 3,105 reported in 2004–05.

Of the 5,215 protection visas granted in 2005–06, 1,255 grants resulted from initial applications, 3,936 resulted from applications for further protection and 24 resulted from ministerial intervention. Of these, 1,272 were counted as part of the Humanitarian Programme. The remainder were grants of further protection to TPV holders and THV holders who have already been counted as part of the Humanitarian Programme, and grants to Australia-born children of protection visa holders.

Over 93 per cent of the 5,215 protection visas granted in 2005–06 were Permanent Protection Visas (PPV). This reflects both the small number of unauthorised boat arrivals during 2005–06 and that almost all further protection visas granted to TPV visa holders were PPVs.

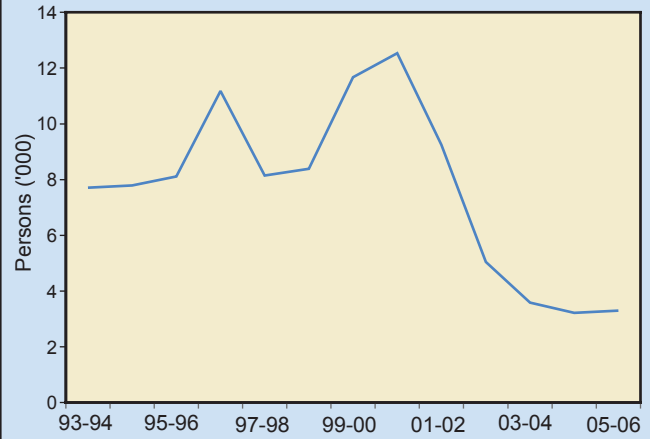
## Legislative Changes - Processing Times

The department has continued to give attention to streamlining onshore protection processing, strengthening arrangements for decision maker training, country information research and character checking to ensure speedy and robust decision-making. Work was maintained with other agencies to reduce waiting times for character and other checks beyond DIMA's control.

On 17 June 2005, the Prime Minister announced that the department would complete all primary assessments of applications for permanent protection visas from the existing caseload of TPV holders by 31 October 2005 and that in future all protection visa decisions would be made within three months of application.

Subsequently, on 12 December 2005, the Migration and Ombudsman Legislation Amendment Act 2005 amended the Migration Act 1958 require that all protection visa decisions be made by the department within 90 days of application.

Fig. 2-27: Initial Applications for Protection Visas (Lodged)



Source Data: ICSE

Fig. 2-28: Initial Protection Visa Applications by Citizenship 2005–06

PRC	919
India	303
Indonesia	282
Sri Lanka	208
Malaysia	172
Pakistan	132
Iraq	100
Rep of Korea	83
Bangladesh	69
Iran	62
Other	970
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,300</b>

Source Data: ICSE

Fig. 2-29: Initial Protection Visa Grants by Citizenship 2005–06

Sri Lanka	245
PRC	179
Iraq	112
Iran	89
Indonesia	78
Egypt, Arab Republic of	45
Pakistan	44
Zimbabwe	40
Burma	34
Afghanistan	32
Other	357
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,255</b>

Source Data: ICSE

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The year 2005–06 was therefore a transitional one in relation to protection visa processing time standards. In previous years, periods where factors outside DIMA's control prevented finalisation were excluded when determining achievement against the timeliness standard, which was measured against outcomes for initial primary applications. Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 17 June 2005 and subsequent legislative amendment on 12 December 2005 requiring the department to make all protection visa decisions within 90 days, periods where factors were outside DIMA's control are no longer excluded from the 90 day calculation.

Details of applications not decided within the required 90 days must be included in reports to the Minister covering periods of four months from 1 July 2005 for tabling in both Houses of Parliament. The reports must include reasons why applications were not decided within the required 90 day timeframe. This change in timeliness standards also applied to applications on hand being processed under the previous standard, many of which were already more than 90 days old when the change was announced. Nevertheless, in 2005–06 the department met the new decision standard for initial protection visa applications in just over 70 per cent of cases for applicants not in detention, and in 88 per cent of cases for applicants in detention. For new applications lodged in 2005–06 by applicants in the community, the department finalised 88 per cent within 90 days of lodgement, and for applications from persons in detention 95 per cent were finalised in this timeframe. The reasons for not meeting the new timeliness standard for decision-making relate primarily to factors outside the department's control.