

## Chapter 4

### Humanitarian Program

- There were 13 014 visas granted under the Humanitarian Program in 2007-08.
- 819 Woman at Risk visas were granted in 2007-08.
- 83 per cent of Humanitarian Program visas were granted to applicants under the offshore component and 17 per cent were granted to applicants under the onshore component.
- A total of 2431 Protection visas were granted in 2007-08 following primary, review or Ministerial intervention decisions, representing an increased activity compared to 2006-07. Of the 2431 Protection visas granted, 1900 counted towards the Humanitarian Program.

# 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, as well as protection to persons who arrive in Australia and are in need of 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 around ten countries operating a well established and successful resettlement program, and consistently ranks within the top three countries in terms of the number 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 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 the assisted refugees. The global Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) was introduced in 1981.

By the second half of the 1980s, the Humanitarian Program had reduced, averaging 11 000 to 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 SAC was closed by 2001.

## Australia's Humanitarian Program

### Onshore protection

Up until 9 August 2008, the onshore component consisted of two types of Protection visas for people who arrived in Australia, applying for protection and subsequently found to engage Australia's protection obligations.

**Fig. 4-1: Humanitarian Program outcomes: visas granted 2003-04 to 2007-08**

Category	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Offshore Refugee	4134	5511	6022	6003	6004
Offshore SHP	7668	6585	6736	5183	4795
Onshore Humanitarian <sup>(a)</sup>	1261 <sup>(b)</sup>	187 <sup>(c)</sup>	114 <sup>(d)</sup>	130	315
THCV	2	17	14	38	84
Onshore SHP	1259	170	100	92	231
Onshore Refugees	788	895	1272	1701	1900
TPV	185	233	277	305	196
PPV	603	662	995	1396	1704
Total Grants	13 851	13 178	14 144	13 017	13 014

(a) Includes SHP visas granted onshore under Ministerial intervention powers and Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786) visas.

(b) Includes 1228 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

(c) Includes 148 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

(d) Includes 46 visas granted to East Timorese under ministerial intervention powers.

Source Data: MPMS, ICSE and IMIRS

These were:

- Permanent Protection Visas (PPV) for people who arrive lawfully in Australia on a temporary visa
- Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) for people who arrive in Australia unlawfully.

In accordance with government policy, on 9 August 2008 all temporary protection (TPV) and secondary movement category, temporary humanitarian (THV) visas were repealed. These visa subclasses included Subclass 785 onshore and Subclasses 447 and 451 offshore. All applications for protection onshore are now only eligible for the grant of a Permanent Protection Visa.

### Offshore resettlement

The offshore component has two categories:

- the Refugee category
- the Special Humanitarian Program category

The Refugee category assist 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 category 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.

## Size of the Humanitarian Program

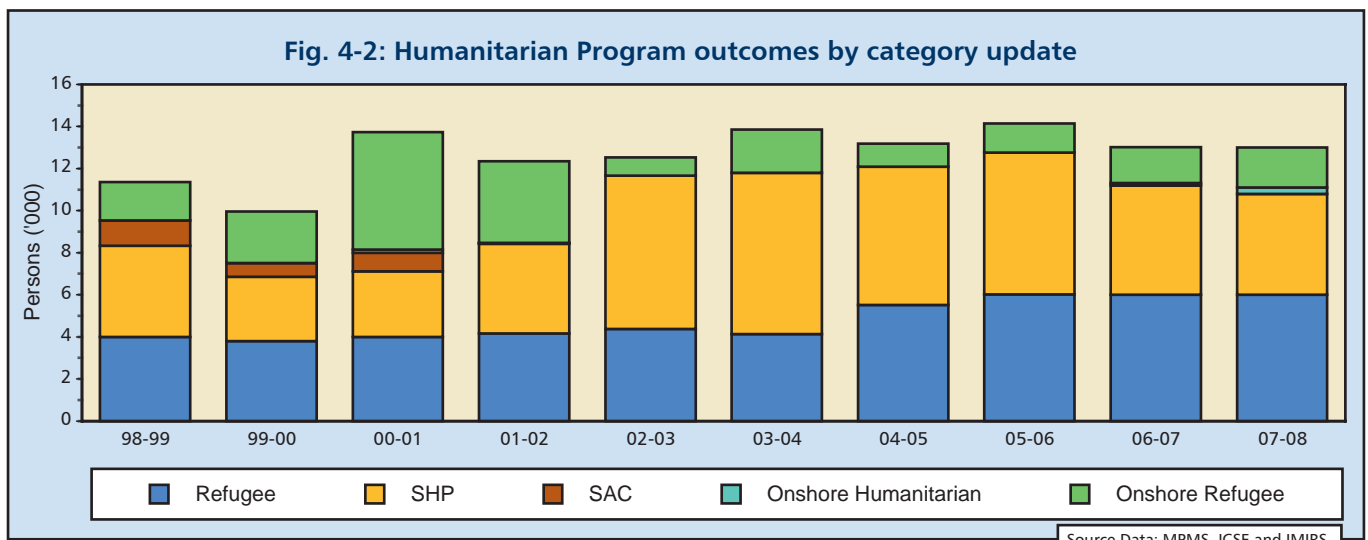
Australia's Humanitarian Program reflects the government's commitment to refugees and others in need of humanitarian assistance both in Australia and overseas. In 2007-08, the government made available 13 000 new Humanitarian Program places, comprising 6000 Refugee places and 7000 Special Humanitarian places.

The program is managed flexibly and is able to adapt to changes in international circumstances, thus ensuring that Australia's contribution to humanitarian resettlement is maximised. The program is managed in such a way that:

- places that are not used in one program year 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
- where resettlement places in excess of those available in a program year are required, the minister may bring forward places from future program years

### Humanitarian Program performance in 2007-08

The 2007-08 Humanitarian Program was fully delivered. At the commencement of the 2007-08 program 11 399 of the 13 000 places were available for use and at the end of that year 13 014 visas had been granted. The additional 1615 places were brought forward from the 2008-09 program. This was the fifth consecutive year in which no unused places were carried over into the following year.



## Initiatives that enhanced the delivery of the Humanitarian Program in 2007-08

In 2007-08, the government expanded upon a number of initiatives from 2006-07, aimed at enhancing program delivery and improving the settlement prospects of humanitarian visa holders. The initiatives included:

- the ongoing delivery of the Australian Cultural Orientation program (AUSCO) with 1304 courses delivered to 25 724 clients in over 25 countries since 2003. New initiatives within the program included the extended 5 day courses, the expansion of children’s and preliterate classes, dedicated ‘Family Day’ and ‘Singles’ sessions, the deployment to Thailand of two participants of the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) program to assist with curriculum development activities and the International Organization for Migration / Refugee Council of Australia Subject Matter Expert educational visit trial in Thailand which allows Australian specialists to visit AUSCO classes
- in order to improve health outcomes for humanitarian entrants, Pre-departure Medical Screening (PDMS) services were implemented in Southern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Malaysia. New services were tailored to meet the needs of the locations in which they were implemented. PDMS ensures that entrants are medically fit to travel to Australia, identifying medical issues that may have arisen in the period between medical checks undertaken prior to visa grant and the time of travel. Where clients are found to have health conditions requiring treatment, travel to Australia is delayed and treatment provided. PDMS also enables clients to be linked, where required, with health services in Australia.

## Humanitarian Program 2008-09

In 2008-09 the size of the Humanitarian Program increased to 13 500 new places comprising 6500 places within the Refugee category (including a one-off increase of 500 places for Iraqi resettlement) and 7000 places for SHP and Onshore Protection places.

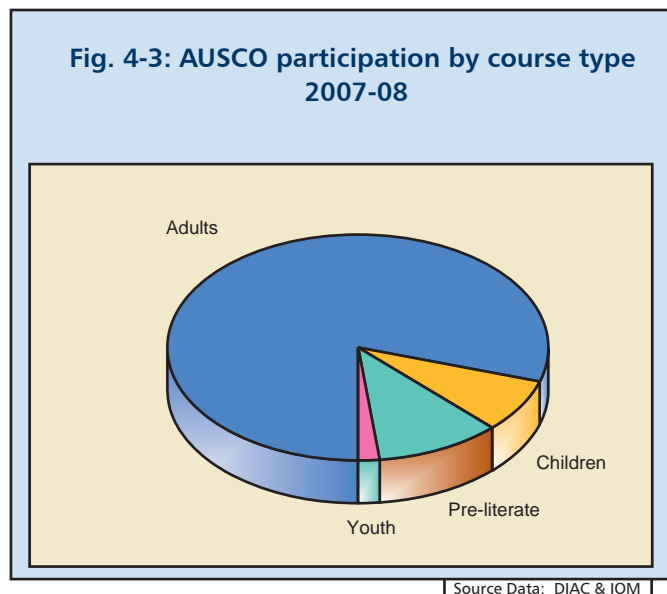
The offshore regional composition of the Humanitarian Program will be evenly distributed in 2008-09. Africa, the Middle East and Asia will remain as priority regions and each region will be allocated a 33 percent intake, with the remaining one percent allocated for other regions.

## Initiatives to enhance the delivery of the Humanitarian Program in 2008-09

Initiatives to enhance the delivery of the 2008-09 Humanitarian Program include:

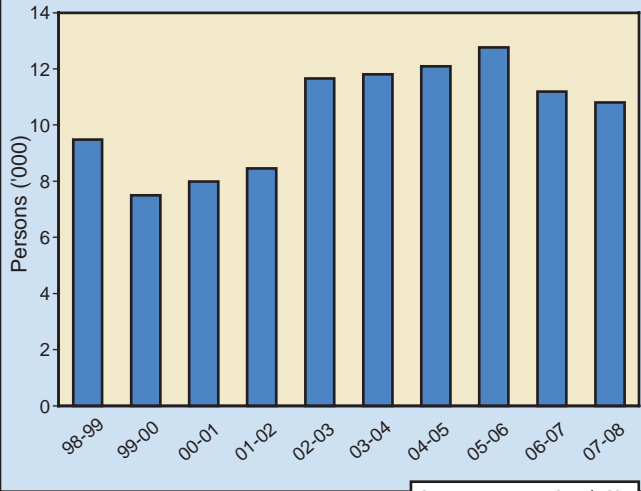
- the ongoing enhancement of the AUSCO program through continued development of the AUSCO Student Handbook, further updates to the Teacher’s Information Kit, the expansion of the ‘Family Day’ and ‘Singles’ sessions, the development of the AUSCO Youth Comic book resource, the trial of a cost-effective one-day-on / one-day-off teaching method that incorporates alternate self-learning days in Thailand, further review of the curriculum and teaching resources and further cooperation and deployments within the AYAD program
- continuing to look at opportunities to assist UNHCR operations to refer suitable numbers of refugees for resettlement in Australia through the provision of project funding
- the expansion of PDMS to Malawi and Turkey

**Fig. 4-3: AUSCO participation by course type 2007-08**



# Humanitarian Program (offshore)

**Fig. 4-4: Offshore humanitarian visa grants**



## Offshore Humanitarian Program performance

In 2007-08, 10 799 resettlement visas were granted under the offshore component comprising:

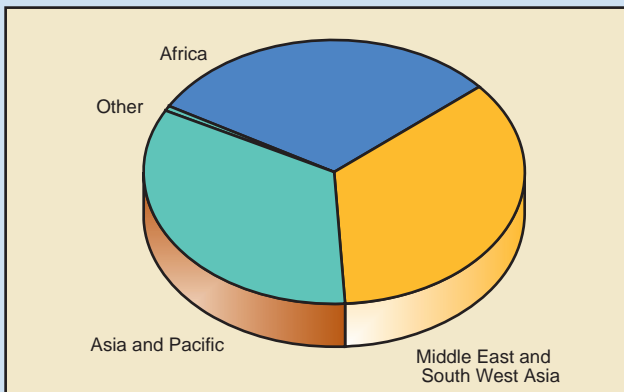
- 6004 Refugee visas
- 4795 SHP visas

## Source regions

In 2007-08, visa grants by source regions were as follows:

- Africa – 30.5 per cent of total offshore grants (a decrease of 20.4 percentage points compared to the 2006-07 offshore outcome)
- Middle East and South West Asia – 35.3 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 7.3 percentage points of the total offshore program in comparison with 2006-07)
- Asia and Pacific – 33.7 per cent of total offshore grants (an increase of 13 percentage points compared to the 2006-07 offshore outcomes)
- Europe, the Americas and the rest of the world – 0.6 per cent of total offshore grants (a marginal increase in offshore grants in comparison with 2006-07)

**Fig. 4-5: Offshore humanitarian visa grants by region 2007-08**



## Processing times

In 2007-08, 75.0 per cent of offshore applications were finalised within 52 weeks of lodgement. On average, offshore visa grants during 2007-08 took 58 weeks. The average visa grant time over the past six years has fluctuated between 38 and 58 weeks, primarily due to external factors outside the control of the Department.

There were 58 208 applications finalised during 2007-08, compared to 86 757 applications finalised in 2006-07 (a difference of 33.0 per cent).

**Fig. 4-6: Offshore humanitarian visa grants by country of birth 2007-08**

Burma	2961
Iraq	2215
Afghanistan	1185
Sudan	1158
Liberia	410
Congo (DRC)	348
Burundi	303
Iran	302
Sierra Leone	267
Sri Lanka	243
Others	1407
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 799</b>

Source Data: MPMS and ICSE

# Humanitarian Program (onshore)

## Onshore Humanitarian Program performance

The Department finalised 4901 Protection visa applications in 2007–08. These included first instance outcomes, outcomes following review tribunal remittals and certain visa cancellation decisions. A total of 2431 Protection visas were granted following primary, review, or ministerial intervention decisions. These figures represent a decrease from 2006–07 with 5067 Protection visas finalised and an increase on the 2243 Protection visas granted in 2006–07. The lower number of finalisations in 2007–08 reflects the large number of further Protection visa applications from Temporary Protection visa (TPV) and offshore Temporary Humanitarian visa (THV) holders finalised in 2006–07.

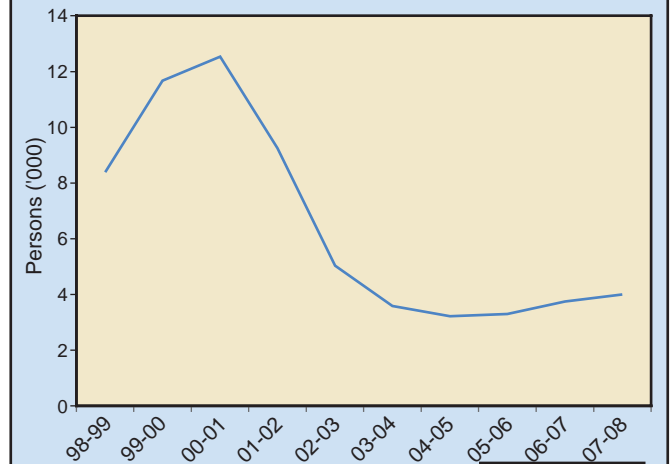
In 2007–08, 1930 of the Protection visas granted resulted from initial applications, while 496 resulted from applications for further protection by TPV and THV holders and five resulted from ministerial intervention. Of the 2431 Protection visas granted, 1900 were part of the Humanitarian Program. The remainder included grants of further protection to TPV and THV holders who had already been counted as part of the Humanitarian Program and grants through operation of law to Australian-born children of Protection visa holders.

Of the 2431 Protection visas granted in 2007–08, some 91 per cent were Permanent Protection visas. This reflects both the small number of unauthorised boat and air arrivals during 2006–07 and the fact that almost all further Protection visas granted to TPV and THV holders were Permanent Protection visas.

The Department continued to focus on improving processes to ensure the integrity of Protection visa decision-making and further enhanced its biannual quality assurance process. The Department continued to show high levels of compliance with policy and procedural requirements overall, and a focus on increasing timely, accurate case progress, data entry and improving record keeping processes.

The Department continued to work with other agencies to reduce waiting times for character and other checks beyond its control. In 2007–08, the Department finalised 3441 ministerial intervention assessments in relation to former Protection visa applicants. This is a 41 per cent reduction from the 2006–07 total of 5882 assessments finalised.

**Fig. 4-7: Initial applications for Protection visas (lodged)**



Source Data: ICSE

**Fig. 4-8: Initial Protection visa applications by citizenship 2007-08**

PRC	1234
Sri Lanka	395
Malaysia	219
Indonesia	218
Iraq	200
India	200
Pakistan	181
Zimbabwe	140
Iran	113
Rep of Korea	93
Other	994
<b>Total</b>	<b>3987</b>

Source Data: ICSE

**Fig. 4-9: Initial Protection visa grants by citizenship 2007-08**

Sri Lanka	434
PRC	412
Iraq	219
Pakistan	117
Iran	96
Zimbabwe	87
Burma (Myanmar)	55
Bangladesh	42
Egypt, Arab Republic of	37
Afghanistan	32
Other	399
<b>Total</b>	<b>1930</b>

Source Data: ICSE

## Reporting on processing times

The Department continued to closely manage the timeliness of Protection visa processing and provide reports on applications not finalised within the specified 90 day timeframe.

In 2007–08, the Department met the new decision standard for initial Protection visa applications in more than 79 per cent of cases. During 2007–08, the Secretary provided three reports to the Minister on the implementation of the 90 day decision timeframe—the first covering the period 1 March 2007 to 30 June 2007, the second from 1 July 2007 to 31 October 2007, and the third from 1 November 2007 to 28 February 2008. The reports demonstrated a continuing improvement including a reduction in the number of cases on hand and an increasing proportion of cases finalised within 90 days. In the majority of cases not processed within 90 days, the reasons for not meeting the standard were outside the Department's control. The causes included external delays such as security assessments or client delay in providing information. The Department continues to work on strategies to reduce delays, improve adherence to the 90 day timeframe and finalise older cases as quickly as possible.