

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR AUSTRALIA'S REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

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7 February 2014

Refugee Council of Australia

- National umbrella body for refugees and the organisations and individuals who support them.
- More than 180 organisational and 700 individual members.
- RCOA promotes the adoption of flexible, humane and practical policies towards refugees and asylum seekers both within Australia and internationally through conducting research, advocacy, policy analysis and community education.
- Small team in Melbourne and Sydney.

Intake Submission

- In October and November 2013, RCOA conducted 47 face-to-face and teleconference consultations with service providers and refugee community representatives across all states and territories of Australia, + 10 written submissions.
- At least 845 individuals and representatives from 195 organisations, people from more than 35 different national and ethnic groups participated.
- Presented to Minister and DIBP in January; Will be publicly released shortly. Ongoing follow-up and advocacy throughout the year.
- www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub.php

Humanitarian Program

Visa sub-class	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Offshore Refugee visas			
Refugee (visa subclass 200)	5,211	5,140	10,238
In-country Special Humanitarian (201)	26	43	71
Emergency Rescue (203)	2	-	30
Woman at Risk (204)	759	821	1,673
Offshore Special Humanitarian visas			
Global Special Humanitarian (202)	2,973	714	503
- 202 visas by ministerial intervention	8	2	-
Onshore Protection visas			
Resolution of Status (851)	2	1	4
Onshore Permanent Protection (866)	4,818	7,038	7,504
TOTAL	13,799	13,759	20,023

¹¹ Offshore visa statistics from Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), *Australia's Offshore Humanitarian Program 2012-13*: http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/immigration-update/australia_offshore_humanitarian_prog_2012-13.pdf, p.22; Onshore Protection Visa statistics 2008-09 to 2011-12 were sourced from DIAC in 2012. The 2012-13 figure is cited in *Australia's Offshore Humanitarian Program 2012-13*.

Key issues and concerns

- Size of Humanitarian Program: Increase to 20,000 in 2012-13 and back down to 13,750 in 2013-14;
- Community Proposal Pilot (costs, implementation, within existing 13,750);
- Family reunion (delays, limitations and closing off pathways);
- Asylum policy:
 - Focus on deterrence over protection;
 - Lack of communication and transparency;
 - Public and political debate;

Key issues and concerns

- Asylum policy (cont.)
 - Longer term impacts of harmful policies on people;
 - Asylum seekers in the community: Lack of work rights and meagre income payments; access to services, education and housing; changes to policies (expired BVEs, uncertainty and delays, code of behaviour, TPVs?);
 - Offshore processing (capacity of PNG and Nauru, poor conditions, legality and RSD, cost);
 - Immigration detention (conditions, children in detention);

Key issues and concerns

- Asylum policy (cont.)
 - Young people in community detention;
 - Refugees with adverse security assessments.
- Settlement issues:
 - Employment, education, housing, health, young people, disability, Women at Risk;
 - Coordination and planning mechanisms;
 - Funding and eligibility;
 - Regional settlement;
 - Changes to machinery of government

Advocacy

- *A New Approach* joint statement (13 August 2013):
 1. Maintain Australia's position as a world leader in resettlement;
 2. Abandon offshore processing;
 3. Redouble efforts to build regional cooperation on refugee protection:
 4. Ensure prompt access to permanent protection;
 5. Commit to a sustainable model of community-based processing;
 6. Maintain a timely and fair system of refugee status determination;
 7. Provide access to timely and realistic family reunion opportunities;
 8. Abandon policies which pit onshore protection against resettlement

- www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130813-NewApproach.pdf

Get involved

- Join RCOA monthly Bulletin mailing list (info@refugeecouncil.org.au);
- Become an organisational or individual member;
- Participate in RCOA's Settlement or Asylum Policy Networks (www.refugeecouncil.org.au/a/pn.php);
- Participate in annual intake submission community consultations;
- Contact RCOA directly if you would like to raise specific issues or concerns at a Federal or international level;
- Schools project.