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The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs



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Acronyms

ABF	Australian Border Force
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFP	Australian Federal Police
BIRO	Business, Industry and Regional Outreach
BIIP	Business Innovation and Investment Program
DAMA	Designated Area Migration Agreements
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
FWO	Fair Work Ombudsman
GSA	Global Skills Attraction
HTVF	Human Trafficking Visa Framework
IMA	Illegal Maritime Arrival
JATF	Joint Agency Task Force
MRD	Migration and Refugee Division
NOM	Net Overseas Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSB	Operation Sovereign Borders
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
PPV	Permanent Protection Visa
PMSOL	Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List
RoS	Resolution of Status
RRAP	Return and Reintegration Assistance Program
SAF	Skilling Australia Fund
SA	South Australia
SHEV	Safe Haven Enterprise Visa
SETS	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support
STSOL	Short Term Skilled Occupation List
SPTV	Sponsored Parent Temporary Visa
SRSS	Status Resolution Support Services
TGV	Temporary Graduate Visa
TSS	Temporary Skill Shortage
UMA	Unauthorised Maritime Arrival
UNC	Unlawful Non-Citizen
VAC	Visa Application Charge
VEVO	Visa Entitlement Verification Online
WA	Western Australia
WHM	Working Holiday Maker
YTS	Youth Transition Support

Purpose

1. The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) has produced this paper to provide understanding of the composition and management of Australia's immigration program in a changing international environment. The Department manages the immigration program in a way that contributes to building a resilient Australian economy and provides opportunities to migrants and their families. This paper also complements existing publicly available resources and provides a tri-annual overview of the Immigration Program, and related border and compliance programs.

Introduction

2. Immigration is central to Australia's history and national story. Australia is a nation that originated from the oldest civilisation in human history, a nation that continues to welcome migrants. Migrants are, and will always be, an essential part of Australia's economy and social fabric. Today, more than half of all Australians either are born overseas or have a parent born overseas. Immigration has contributed to Australia's nation building and the richness in diversity of its people and cultural identities. Australia's national identity over the years has also evolved into a cohesive community, of which Australians are proud. This national pride and achievement has led to successive Australian governments to maintain a planned immigration program.
3. Australia's immigration program has changed since post-war when the first federal immigration portfolio was created in 1945 to attract migrants, primarily from the United Kingdom, for the purpose of increasing Australia's population. Several decades later, the abandonment of the White Australia policy ushered in a new era of multiculturalism, when the nation's history was re-penned with an influx of migrants from all parts of the world. With this change, Australia has grown from a population of about 7 million people after the Second World War into a nation of more than 26 million people in 2022, primarily due to immigration. Immigration also bolstered Australia's economic prosperity, whereby its role in attracting workers and temporary migrants enabled the nation to meet its labour market needs, while simultaneously enhancing people-to-people connections and building strong regional and global partnerships in an evolving geopolitical world.
4. Australia is home for more than 300 ancestries. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that just over 29 per cent of Australia's resident population was born overseas¹, a much higher level than most other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The Australian Government's global commitments and its domestic multicultural and social inclusion policies therefore present Australia as a favourable destination for migrants, committed to providing them with settlement opportunities.²
5. Since the early 1970s, the immigration program has been an element of a universal, non-discriminatory visa system, focusing on the contribution migrants make to Australia regardless of their ethnicity, gender or cultural beliefs. The robustness of Australia's immigration program has meant immigration is a key enabler of Australia's success. Our migration system continues to support Australia's transition to a more skilled, innovative and diverse economy, enhance our security and sovereign capabilities, and drive higher productivity, wages and living standards.
6. However, the complexity of the current migration system and labour market challenges exacerbated by COVID-19, is not delivering outcomes for Australians. With population and skill challenges mirrored across developed economies, Australia now faces increasing competition for talented migrants, whose human capital is critical to Australia's future economic stability and security. As we confront considerable

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Australia's Population by Country of Birth*.

² Arian F, Sharma S, Vaughan M, Vaughan D, Venner M, (2019), *Settlement Experience of Syrian and Iraqi Refugees: Opportunities, challenges & the way forward*, Report, Edmund Rice Centre, Sydney.

change and uncertainty, a strategic approach is needed to successfully respond to these challenges and to leverage opportunities both now and into the future.

A Review of the Migration System

7. On 2 September 2022, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Claire O’Neil announced a comprehensive review of Australia’s migration system to ensure it meets the challenges of the coming decades. The reform proposes to end the ad hoc and piecemeal changes to the visa system, while focussing on a well-targeted, efficient and equitable migration system that has a clear set of objectives that contribute to Australia’s prosperity, unity and security. To achieve this, the Minister appointed Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM to lead the review, alongside migration experts Professor Joanna Howe and Mr John Azarias (the Reviewers). The reviewers presented the Review of the Migration System³ (the report) to the Government on 21 March 2023, which outlines a series of options for the future of Australia’s migration system for the Government’s consideration.
8. On 27 April 2023, the Minister released the report alongside an outline of the Government’s proposed migration strategy ‘*A Migration System for a More Prosperous and Secure Australia*’ (the outline), which will inform the development of the Migration Strategy (the strategy). The outline considers input from the review, while also drawing on extensive consultation across business groups, unions and civil society. It presents changes to build a migration system that works for Australia – its people, businesses, and governments – and for migrants themselves.
9. Following consultation with State and Territory governments and key stakeholders – unions, business groups, and civil society – on the outline and the proposed policy shifts, the Government will continue to refine the strategy before its release later this year.

2023-24 Budget and other related measures

10. To ensure the continued and effective management of the immigration program, while complementing the Government’s proposed vision for a targeted, simpler migration system that serves our national interests and helps migrants thrive in our society and economy, the Government has invested in the following immigration-related measures within the 2023-24 Budget:
 - Allocate approximately 70 per cent of places in the 2023-24 permanent Migration Program to the Skill stream and approximately 30 per cent to the Family stream, where partner and child visas will remain demand-driven. This will complement medium and longer-term efforts to address domestic skill deficits through education, training and sectoral reform.
 - Increase the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) from \$53,900 to \$70,000 from 1 July 2023.
 - Provide an extra two years of post-study work rights to Temporary Graduate visa holders with select degrees, to improve the pipeline of skilled labour in key sectors.
 - Provide an additional \$48.1 million over 12 months to support 500 visa processing officers to manage the number of visa applications on hand.
 - Invest \$27.8 million over two years to upgrade existing visa ICT systems to improve visa service delivery efficiency, and increase Australia’s attractiveness for talent, students and tourists.
 - Continue support for vulnerable young refugees and migrants, with \$9.1 million over 12 months, to ensure the continued delivery of Youth Transition Support services, which improve employment, education and social connections for refugees and vulnerable migrants aged 15 to 25.

³ Review of the Migration System Final Report was developed by views of a diverse range of organisations and individuals. The Report considered 483 public submissions from individuals, corporations, unions, think tanks and other interested parties.

- As part of the First Action Plan to implement the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, the Government is providing \$8.9 million to expand the Family Violence Provisions to additional visa subclasses and \$1.1 million to extend the funding for the specialised visa support service within the Department for visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence.
11. In addition to the 2023-24 Budget measures, the Government has also made several announcements regarding various aspects of the immigration program, including:
- From 1 July 2023, New Zealand citizens who have been living in Australia for four years or more will be eligible to apply directly for Australian citizenship. They will no longer need to first apply for and be granted a permanent visa.
 - Delivering a permanent pathway for Temporary Protection visa (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise visa (SHEV) holders.

Impacts of COVID-19

12. Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on the administration of immigration and citizenship programs. As we transition away from the wide-ranging disruption generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a valuable opportunity to reconsider the purpose and operation of our migration system to ensure it is well-placed to address the challenges presented by our current and future environment.
13. The pandemic affected the Department's capacity to deliver services and programs in Australia and overseas. The Department's staffing resources were diminished around the world as countries responded to the local health impacts of COVID-19. In April 2020, about 75 per cent of Australian-based staff from the overseas network had returned home or were seeking to do so and fewer than 10 per cent of locally engaged staff were undertaking visa processing work.
14. Locally, Australia's COVID-19 travel restrictions, jointly managed by the Department and the Australian Border Force (ABF), were in place between 20 March 2020 and 6 July 2022:
- During the pandemic lockdown period, over 1,179,500 travel exemption requests were received and processed. At its peak, more than 150 staff who normally focused on visa processing were diverted to processing travel exemptions. Other visa processing staff focused on finalising visa applications for applicants who were exempt from Australia's travel restrictions.
 - Over the pandemic period, more than 70 temporary concessions relating to temporary and permanent visa programs were introduced. Further detail about these visa concessions is available on the Department's website at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/covid19/visa-information>.
 - The border progressively reopened to different cohorts and visa categories from November 2021, and then to all fully vaccinated visa holders from 21 February 2022.
 - On 6 July 2022, all international travel restrictions ceased to operate, where all traveller were permitted to enter Australia without an exemption or showing proof of vaccination status.
15. One of the more significant impacts following the COVID-19 border restrictions has been the impact of border openings on Net Overseas Migration (NOM),⁴ as the recovery in migrant arrivals has occurred faster than expected. More students have returned to Australia from offshore, and the latest visa grant data indicates an improved outlook for student arrivals over the next year. Coinciding with these new arrivals, we have seen the number of migrant departures from Australia, particularly international students and working holiday makers, decrease.

⁴ Net Overseas Migration (NOM) is based on any travellers being in or out of Australia for 12 months or more over a 16 month period (the '12/16 month' rule). It includes temporary and permanent visa holders, New Zealanders and Australian citizens. NOM is a demographic measure rather than a migration policy concept.

16. Given this, in the May 2023 Budget, the NOM forecasts were upgraded to reflect a one-off catch up from the pandemic, where NOM is currently forecast to reach (+)400,000 in 2022-23 and (+)315,000 in 2023-24, before decreasing to around (+)260,000 in the forward years. However, notwithstanding the recovery in NOM, the total population of Australia is still expected to be 750,000 people (2.5 per cent) smaller by 30 June 2031 compared with pre-pandemic forecasts.

Progress to date

17. The Department is committed to further improving processing times and has delivered on the Government's priority to reduce the visa backlog by the end of 2022:
- As of 31 March 2023, there were just under 575,700 on-hand visa applications including temporary visa applications. This is 380,100 (or 40 per cent) fewer temporary and migration visa applications on-hand, compared to nearly one million on-hand applications in June 2022. Of the 575,700 on-hand applications, 141,900 are in programs subject to capping and/or queuing. The cap is set annually in a legislative instrument based on Migration Program planning levels. Temporary visa applications on-hand have reduced by nearly 70 per cent compared to June 2022.
 - From 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023, the Department processed close to 6.15 million temporary and permanent visa applications, including nearly 3.79 million visitor, student and temporary skilled visa applications, where over 5.32 million of these applications were made by applicants outside of Australia. In key visa programs, the Department is now finalising more visas than before the pandemic. Between July 2022 and March 2023, the Department finalised 59 per cent more offshore Student visas than in the same period in 2018-19. For Temporary Skill Shortage visas, there has been a 10 per cent increase in finalisations.
 - As of 31 March 2023, the number of temporary visa holders in Australia has rebounded to over 2.46 million, having fallen to 1.61 million in December 2021 from a pre-pandemic figure of 2.34 million in March 2020. A further 4.2 million visa holders are outside Australia and can travel to Australia, including 249,000 temporary visa holders with some form of work rights. This means that the number of temporary visa holders who are already in Australia has returned to pre-pandemic levels.
 - Since 1 July 2022, the Department received nearly 5.80 million new visa applications, compared with nearly 1.77 million for the same period in 2021-22. In the offshore Student visa program, lodgements have returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, with nearly 290,000 lodgements between July 2022 and March 2023 compared to nearly 210,000 in the same period in 2018-19.
18. We have progressively strengthened our immigration risk, integrity and intelligence systems, which has enabled visa decision makers to more efficiently identify high risk visa applicants. Combined with the impact of dealing with a backlog of old applications where there has been a change in circumstances due to COVID-19, and a reduction in the quality of visa applications since border reopening, we have seen an increase in the refusal rate from 4.5 per cent in 2019-20 to 7.7 per cent for 2022-23 (as at the end of March). When compared to pre-pandemic levels, over nine-years from 2008-09 to 2016-17, the refusal rate across our visa programs remained relatively steady between 2.1 per cent and 2.5 per cent.

Outlook

19. While the Australian economy progressively recovers from the effects of the pandemic, skill and labour shortages persist. The Australian Government is currently addressing these shortages, but within an increased global competition for attracting and retaining skilled migrants, as other countries also seek to rebuild their economies and offset the challenges posed by ageing domestic populations.
20. Despite these challenges, social cohesion and the support for immigration and multiculturalism have remained strong throughout the pandemic⁵. In 2021, the Scanlon-Monash Index of social cohesion

⁵ Scanlon Foundation Research Institute (2021), *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2021*.

continued in a positive direction, with an increased proportion of respondents (76 per cent) indicating that “accepting migrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger” and fewer respondents than previously believing that Australia’s immigration intake is too high (31 per cent). Moreover, the 2022 Mapping Social Cohesion Report points to increased positive support for multiculturalism (88% of respondents were in favour) and a belief that immigrants are good for the economy (87%).

21. The Government’s vision for a targeted, simpler migration system will focus on a reform agenda that serves Australia’s national interest, while continuing to help migrants thrive in a multicultural society.

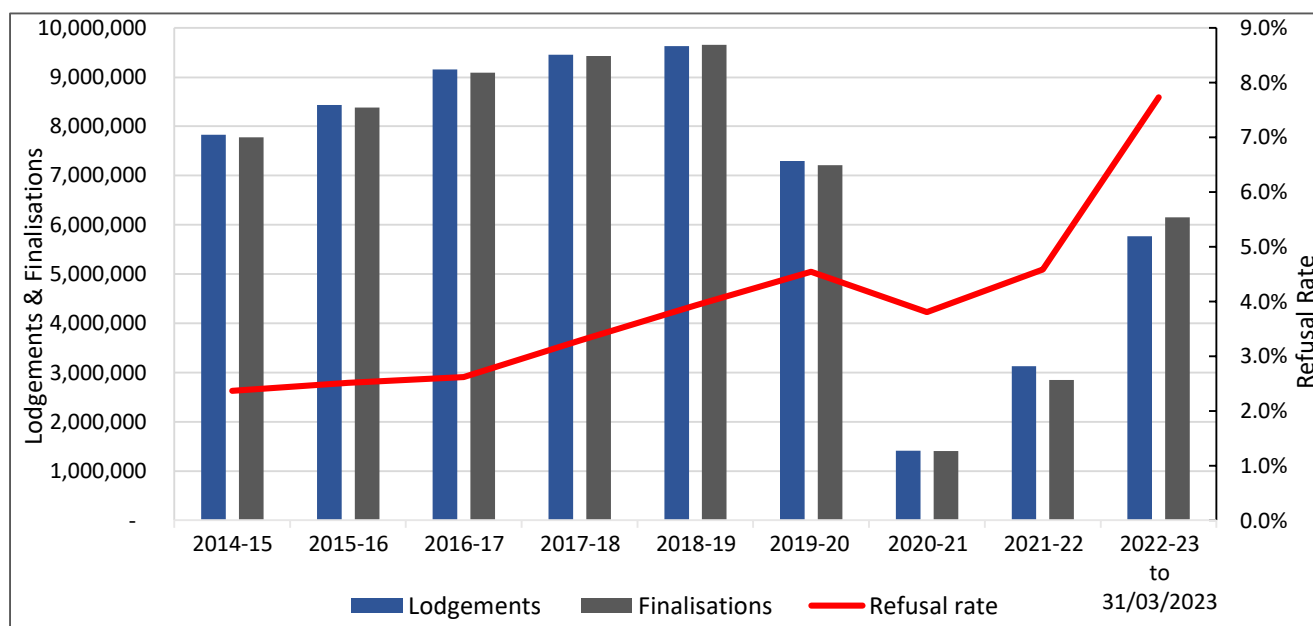
Administering the immigration program

22. Visa and citizenship programs are the bedrock of our migration system. The effective administration of these programs remains fundamental to maintaining high levels of social cohesion and broad public support for immigration. Australia’s current immigration program is broad and has several specific visa programs across temporary visitor, student and work visas, permanent skilled and family visas, and refugee and humanitarian visas – all of which contribute to Australia’s prosperity, unity and security.
23. Our migration system continues to support labour market shortages where they cannot be filled by Australians, while also enabling family unification needs of Australian citizens and permanent residents. In addition to this, we continue to meet Australia’s commitment to providing resettlement and protection through our humanitarian program.
24. The administration of migration programs involves dual, complementary, objectives to:
- facilitate the entry and stay of those who legitimately seek to visit, study, work, be reunited with family, or obtain protection
 - prevent the entry or stay of non-citizens attempting to disguise their identity or intentions, or who otherwise pose a risk to the security or safety of the Australian community or to the national interest.
25. The Department’s management of Australia’s immigration program anticipates and responds to changing international circumstances. Over the longer term, this has included rapid growth in the international movement of people for a broad range of purposes, from tourism to permanent migration.
26. To further support the delivery of the immigration program, from 1 May 2023, the Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs function has been reintegrated within the Immigration Group of the Department of Home Affairs. This consolidation of intimately related functions will better align service delivery, processing and community engagement across the immigration continuum.

Broad visa trends

27. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visa applications lodged by people seeking to enter or remain in Australia had shown consistent annual growth (Figure 1).
- From 2014-15 to 2018-19, temporary and permanent visa applications grew by about 1.8 million, or 23 per cent.
 - In 2019-20, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced visa applications by more than 2.3 million, or 24 per cent, compared to the previous year.
 - In 2020-21, visa applications declined by nearly 6 million, or 81 per cent, compared to 2019-20.
 - In 2021-22, visa applications grew by more than 1.7 million, or 121 per cent, compared to 2020-21.
28. The increase in visa refusal rates since 2014-15 reflects:
- policy settings designed to strike a balance between the efficiency and integrity of Australia’s visa programs
 - use of more sophisticated risk analysis and systems to assist in the assessment of applications.

Figure 1 Total non-humanitarian visa programs trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

29. More recently, the increase in refusal rates in 2022-23 reflects:

- finalisation of visa applications lodged before or during the pandemic, where there has been a change in circumstances, including where the applicant no longer intended to travel to Australia
- changes in the socio-economic conditions in some of Australia's largest source countries, including due to the impacts of COVID-19 and a reduction in the quality of visa applications lodged
- more mature risk management capabilities in place, including specialised risk and integrity units, developed during the COVID-19 period.

Visa processing times

30. The Department continues to assess applications on a case-by-case basis in line with Government priorities and visa criteria set out in Australia's migration legislation.

31. Factors that affect processing times for applications include:

- the volume of applications received, including considering applications that fall within priority processing parameters
- provision of all required information when a visa application is lodged
- the applicant's responsiveness to requests for further information
- complexities in assessing genuineness, character, health, and security requirements.

32. Global visa processing times are available on the Department's website at:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-processing-times/global-processing-times>

33. Student visa applications are processed on average within 15 days, during the March peak-period. The on-hand caseload reduced by 58 per cent in comparison to the same time last year. The number of applications lodged are 19 per cent above pre-COVID levels.

34. Processing times for Temporary Skilled Shortage (subclass 482) visa applications have improved with the median processing time in the month of March to 21 days. Within Employer Sponsored Skilled programs, healthcare and education sector applicants are assessed within one business day of lodgement.

35. Processing a Working Holiday visa for people outside of Australia currently takes less than one day on average.

36. The Department is focused on improving efficiency in visa processing by:
- Encouraging online lodgement, which reduces manual data entry. As of 31 March 2023:
 - 99.8 per cent of all temporary visa applications were lodged electronically, compared to 77.8 per cent in 2014-15
 - 94.4 per cent of all permanent visa applications were lodged electronically, compared to 74.4 per cent in 2014-15.
 - Streamlining visa systems and processes.
 - Using resources more flexibly. For example, in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and to reduce the number of visa applications on-hand, the Department now utilises available resources across work streams and location to deliver on immigration priorities.

Immigration outreach and engagement

37. The Department has enhanced its outreach and engagement capability to support delivery of an increased permanent Migration Program and support businesses and State and Territory governments to meet their labour and skill needs. This capability is focused on improving client experience, reducing visa backlogs and supporting the Government's efforts to address workforce and critical skill shortages.

The Department's enhanced capability includes onshore and offshore support. The Department's Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO) officers engage onshore with business, industry and government agencies, as well as Australian regional stakeholders. BIROs also engage with unions, professional and industry associations and guilds. Offshore in key countries overseas, the Department's Global Skills Attraction (GSA) officers are targeting to attract skills Australia needs and promoting Australia as an attractive migration destination of choice. The officers engage with business, industry, academia and potential applicants in priority sectors in need of skills and labour.

The migrant-client experience will be improved through clear, targeted information distributed through client service channels, including the Departmental website. Engagement techniques includes digital outreach, communications and marketing to enhance the quality of visa applications and assist in reducing processing times.

38. The Department is implementing a 12-month international marketing campaign to attract overseas skilled workers in key occupations, and to promote Australia as a destination of choice for skilled migrants, as announced in the October 2022 Budget.
39. Digital advertising is targeting the health, education, infrastructure, and information and communications technology sectors. A dedicated campaign website, www.smartmoveaustralia.gov.au provides information about living and working in Australia and how to apply for an Australian skilled visa.
40. As of 31 March 2023, the website had attracted over 6,973,107 visitors. Over 54,138 users had commenced the SkillSelect expression of interest form for a skilled visa for Australia as result of digital advertising.

Net Overseas Migration

41. Net Overseas Migration (NOM) is a demographic concept, not a visa type or a migration policy. NOM is the net gain or loss of population through immigration to Australia and emigration from Australia. NOM is calculated based on international travellers staying in or out of Australia for 12 months or more, over a 16-month period. The term 'international travellers' includes all visa holders, including New Zealanders and arrivals and departures of Australian citizens.

42. Since June 2006, NOM has been the key driver of Australia's population growth⁶. Between 2008 and 2018, NOM remained between 172,000 and 315,700 per annum.
43. The rebound in temporary migration following the re-opening of Australia's international borders was initially slow but has recently started to recover at a faster rate. This has resulted in an upgrade in the forecast level of population, even though the total number of temporary migrants arriving in Australia is not expected to make up for the loss in migration during the pandemic for some time.
44. NOM is forecast to be 400,000 in 2022–23 and 315,000 in 2023–24. This increase over previous years reflects a one-off catch up from the pandemic. The increase in migration and population growth is expected to be temporary, with migration forecasts to largely return to normal patterns from 2024–25.
45. Even with this stronger trend for the near term, the total NOM is not expected to catch up to pre-pandemic level forecasts until 2029–30. On current forecasts, NOM will still be cumulatively 315,000 lower than pre pandemic forecasts by June 2023, and 215,000 lower by June 2024.
46. Future trends based on the 2021 Intergenerational Report predicts that NOM will account for around 74 per cent of Australia's population growth by 2060-61⁷ and play an important role in continuing economic growth.

Table 1 Net Overseas Migration forecasts, for years ending 30 June

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
NOM, Australia	184,000	400,000	315,000	260,000	260,000	260,000

Source: **Budget 2023-24, Commonwealth of Australia, May 2023; ABS data**

Temporary visas

47. Australia's temporary visa programs allow people to come to Australia for a broad range of specific purposes such as to visit, study and work. This delivers substantial economic and cultural benefits for both migrants and Australians. The student and visitor visa programs are key enablers of Australia's international education and tourism sectors.
48. A proportion of temporary visa holders apply for extension of temporary stay, while some temporary visa holders opt for permanent stay through the Migration Program (see section on 'Relationship between temporary and permanent migration').
49. Post-pandemic reopening of borders has facilitated an increase in the number of temporary visa holders in Australia (see Table 2). As of 31 March 2023, nearly 2.46 million people were in Australia on temporary visas, compared to over 1.83 million as of 31 March 2022, an increase of 34.8 per cent. Of the 2.46 million current temporary visa holders, an estimated 2.07 million have some form of work rights.
50. New Zealand citizen Special Category visa holders are long term lawful residents in Australia. They are the largest cohort of permanent temporary residents without any significant recent change in the size of this cohort. The largest percentage increases is due to Visitor and Working Holiday Maker visas.
51. Bridging visas allow the visa holders to stay lawfully in Australia while waiting for the Department's outcome of their visa application or review of a visa decision. The progress towards reducing on-hand visa backlog has also reduced the number of Bridging visa application.
52. From 1 July 2023, New Zealand citizens living in Australia will have a direct pathway to Australian citizenship.

⁶ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia, Inquiry Report No. 77*, Australian Government; The Treasury (2021), *2021 Intergenerational Report*, Australian Government.

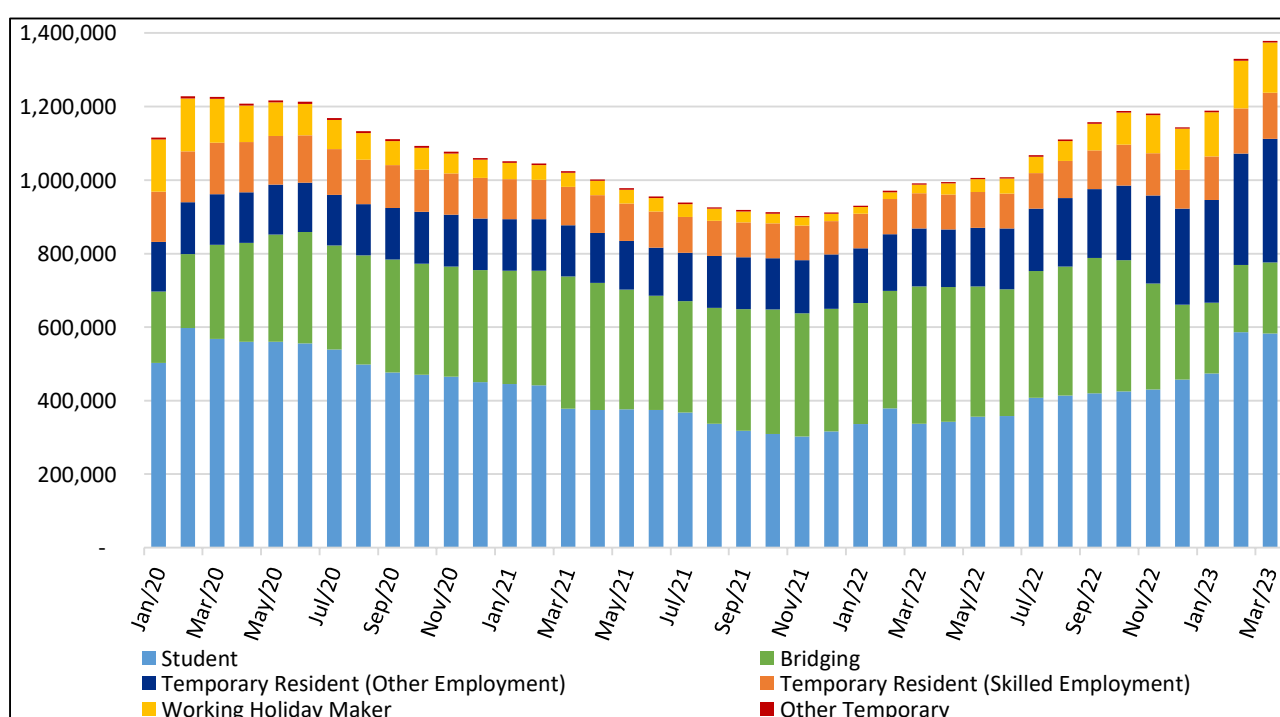
⁷ The Treasury (2021), *2021 Intergenerational Report*, Australian Government.

Table 2 Change in the number of temporary visa holders in Australia between 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023

Visa Category	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	Difference	% Change
Bridging (excluding Bridging visa E)	373,109	193,988	-179,121	-48.0%
Crew and Transit	10,174	23,832	13,658	134.2%
Other Temporary	3,497	4,482	985	28.2%
Special Category	659,961	687,137	27,176	4.1%
Student	336,844	582,758	245,914	73.0%
Temporary Protection	18,986	22,824	3,838	20.2%
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	158,528	335,877	177,349	111.9%
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	85,939	124,693	28,754	30.0%
Visitor	144,982	347,363	202,381	139.6%
Working Holiday Maker	23,021	136,621	113,600	493.5%
Total	1,825,041	2,459,575	634,534	34.8%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Figure 2 Number of temporary visa holders in Australia⁸, January 2020 to 31 March 2023



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

COVID-19 pandemic event visa

53. On 2 March 2022, the former Government announced changes to the COVID-19 pandemic event visa, including expanding the visa beyond key sectors to allow work in all sectors, with the visa timeframe based on the need of the sector in which the applicant is working or intending to work. A COVID-19 pandemic event visa holder can remain in Australia for:

- 12 months, if they are working or have a job offer to work in the following key sectors: agriculture; food processing; health care; aged care; disability care; childcare; tourism and hospitality

⁸ Excludes Visitor, Crew, Transit, Other Protection, Bridging Visa E and Special Category visa holders.

- 12 months, if they are working for or have a job offer from a Commonwealth funded aged care service
- 6 months, if they are working or have a job offer to work in any other sector in Australia.

54. As of 31 March 2023, 197,822 visa applications were received and 153,362 visas were granted, primarily to workers in critical sectors since the visa was introduced in 2020.

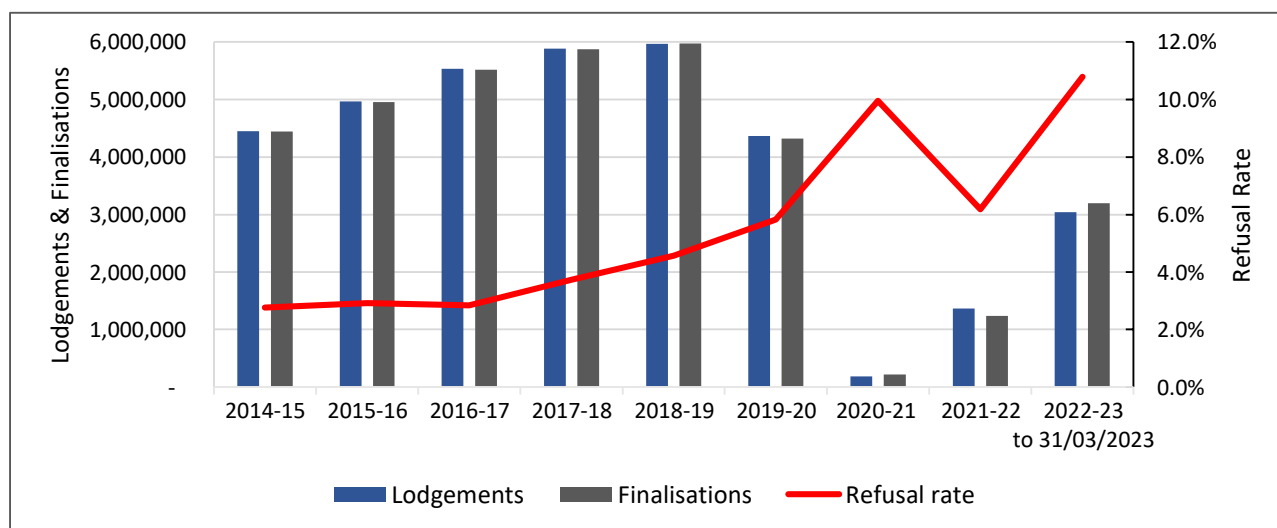
Visitor visa

55. The international tourism industry provides substantial economic benefits and generates jobs, investment and growth in communities throughout the country. The Department supports this industry through expedited online and electronic visitor visa options.

56. As of 31 March 2023, the number of Visitor visa holders in Australia had increased to 139.6 per cent compared to the previous year and is equal with the same period in 2019 (see Table 2).

57. The Department has prioritised the finalisation of on-hand Visitor visa applications lodged outside Australia to reduce processing times. As of 31 August 2022, the median processing time for Visitor visa applications was 3 days. As of 31 March 2023, this has reduced to less than one day.

Figure 3 Visitor visa program trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



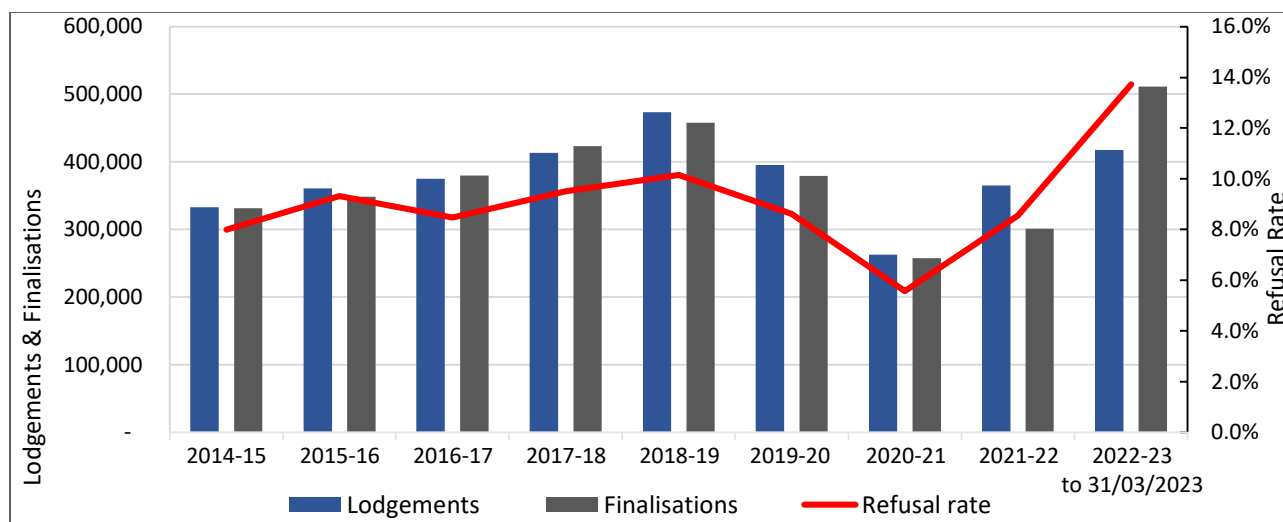
Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Student visa

58. The international education, training and research sectors contribute significantly to economic, social and cultural spheres of Australia. Student visas enable genuine international students to pursue their chosen course of study in Australia, provided the course undertaken is subject to Australia's quality assurance framework for international education, as set out under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*.

59. Factors contributing to Student visa demand include education sector reputation and quality, cost, marketing, and the value of Australian dollar. The Department works with the Department of Education, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Austrade, education regulators and education peak bodies to support a whole-of-government approach to the international education sector.

Figure 4 Student visa program trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023⁹)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

60. Following the progressive reopening of Australia's international borders from 15 December 2021, there has been a strong growth in Student visa lodgements as well as an increase in the number of student visa holders in Australia (see Tables 3 and 4).
61. With growth in student visa lodgements since the opening of the borders, non-genuine and fraudulent activity has risen, which has resulted in a decrease in the grant rate, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Offshore student visa grant rate by sector between 2018-19 and 2021-22, and year to date 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Sector	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 to 31 March 2023
Foreign Affairs or Defence Sector	99.2%	99.5%	96.3%	99.0%	99.4%
Higher Education Sector	91.3%	89.6%	89.6%	94.4%	84.5%
Independent ELICOS ¹⁰ Sector	88.5%	91.7%	81.3%	85.0%	91.2%
Non-Award Sector	99.5%	99.6%	78.7%	99.4%	99.3%
Postgraduate Research Sector	94.8%	97.1%	96.7%	96.7%	96.9%
Schools Sector	91.1%	91.4%	96.2%	96.6%	92.7%
Vocational Education and Training Sector	61.7%	63.9%	54.9%	68.9%	51.1%
Grand Total	86.8%	87.6%	85.5%	89.5%	80.1%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

⁹ Includes all primary and secondary Student visa applications.

¹⁰ ELICOS - English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

Table 4 Change in the number of Student visa applications lodged by sector between 2020-21 and 2021-22, and year to date 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Sector	2020-21	2021-22	Difference	% Change	2022-23 to 31/03/2023
Foreign Affairs or Defence	1,639	3,552	1,913	116.7%	3,281
Higher Education	143,199	194,176	50,977	35.6%	219,906
Independent ELICOS	6,284	32,444	26,160	416.3%	51,464
Non-Award	389	8,368	7,979	2051.2%	9,212
Postgraduate Research	9,611	12,444	2,833	29.5%	11,236
Schools	2,542	5,466	2,924	115.0%	7,221
Vocational Education and Training	98,969	108,554	9,585	9.7%	114,893
Total	262,633	365,004	102,371	39.0%	417,213

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 5 Number of Student visa holders in Australia, quarterly to 31 March 2023

Sector	31-Dec-21	31-Mar-22	30-Jun-22	30-Sep-22	31-Dec-22	31-Mar-23
Foreign Affairs or Defence	1,062	1,252	2,123	2,442	1,979	3,375
Higher Education	162,658	181,640	196,048	236,674	234,380	331,431
Independent ELICOS	1,931	5,092	12,065	24,922	35,370	41,629
Non-Award	128	977	993	7,792	3,263	9,075
Postgraduate Research	19,327	22,534	22,460	23,138	22,816	26,397
Schools	9,400	7,586	8,006	10,689	7,104	11,291
Vocational Education and	121,432	117,752	116,213	113,657	152,047	159,549
Total	315,938	317,904	357,908	419,314	456,959	582,747

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

62. The Department implemented a number of concessions to ensure international students and graduates were not disadvantaged by the COVID-19 pandemic and that Australia remained an attractive destination for international students. These concessions for student visa holders included:
- Student visa holders who studied online, outside Australia, while borders were closed, could count that study towards the Australian Study Requirement for a Temporary Graduate visa.
 - Visa Application Charge (VAC) waivers were available for students who needed to reapply for their student visas because of COVID-19 travel restrictions.
 - Temporary relaxation until 30 June 2023, of the cap to the maximum hours of work permitted for student visa holders, with student visa holders permitted to work unlimited hours and to begin working prior to course commencement. These measures aimed to alleviate immediate workforce shortages.
 - Refund of VAC charged to student visa holders who arrived in Australia between 19 January 2022 and 19 March 2022.
63. The Department also took a flexible approach in cases where the COVID-19 pandemic prevented students from meeting visa conditions, such as where they were not able to attend classes in person.
64. The Temporary Graduate visa (TGV) allows international students to live, study for graduate program and work in Australia after completion of their studies. It remains a well-utilised pathway for Student visa holders, with 121,604 Student visa holders granted a TGV in 2022-23 to 31 March 2023.

65. On 21 February 2023, the Ministers for Education and Home Affairs jointly announced an extension of the Temporary Graduate (485) visa to include post study work rights for eligible graduates. This change only applies to the Post-Study Work Stream of the Temporary Graduate (485) visa, and to students who have undertaken courses that support labour supply in areas of skills shortages. Areas of study eligible for additional two-year period will include health, teaching, engineering, agriculture and ICT. The availability of the additional period will commence on 1 July 2023. Visa timeframes for graduates with eligible qualifications are:

- Two to four years for select Bachelor degrees
- Three to five years for select Masters degrees
- Four to six years for all doctoral degrees

These arrangements will be subject to annual review.

66. On 21 February 2023, the Ministers for Education and Home Affairs also jointly announced that the student visa work hours cap will be re-instated from 1 July 2023, with an increase to the allowable working hours to 48 hours per fortnight; a twenty per cent increase from the 40 hour-limit before the COVID-19 period. Student visa holders already working in the aged care sector on 9 May 2023 can continue to work unrestricted hours in the aged care sector until 31 December 2023.

Working Holiday Makers

67. The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program promotes cultural exchange and boosts people-to-people connections between young adults from Australia and 47 other countries. This provides opportunities to travel and undertake short-term work during their holiday.

68. The WHM program includes two visa subclasses, the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa and the Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa. The Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa has additional visa criteria compared to the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa that must be satisfied by visa applicants, such as a minimum level of English language ability and educational qualifications. These additional criteria result in longer visa processing times for subclass 462 visa applicants.

69. Recent applications lodged are being finalised quickly, with 75 per cent of applications lodged finalised in 7 days for the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa (it currently takes less than one day to process an offshore application), and 34 days for the Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa.

70. On 20 March 2020, when COVID-19 led to border closures to all non-citizens and non-residents, there were 137,461 WHM visa holders in Australia. By 30 June 2020, this number decreased to 5,691. When borders re-opened to fully vaccinated students and skilled workers on 15 December 2021, there were just 20,246 WHM visa holders in Australia.

71. The WHM program has now recovered to pre-pandemic levels with the number of WHM visa holders in Australia greater compared to when Australia closed its borders in March 2020.

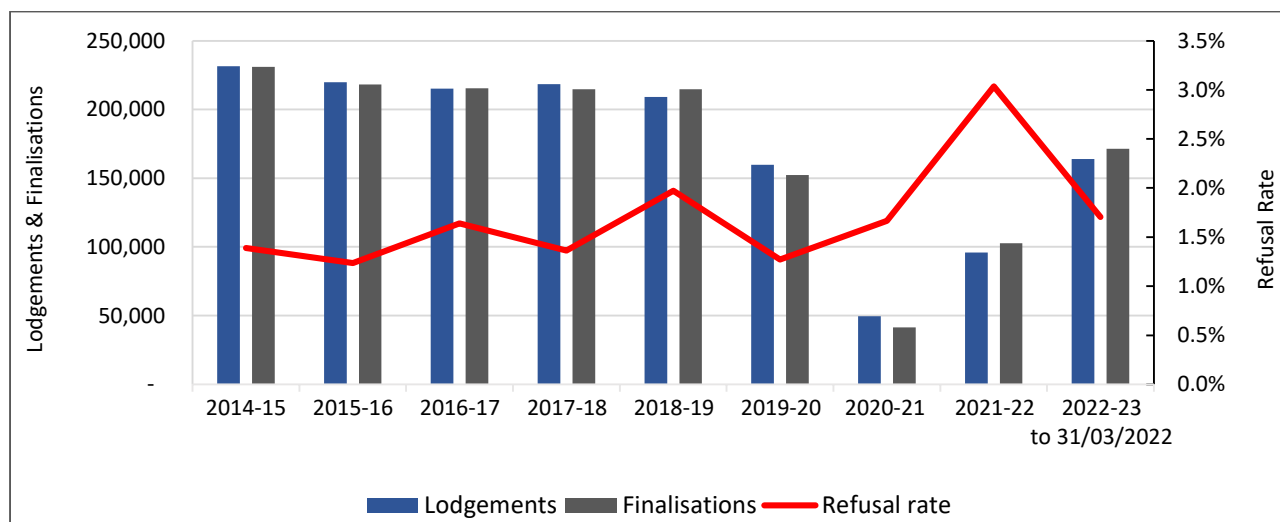
72. From 4 April 2020, the introduction of a Pandemic Event (subclass 408) visa allowed WHM visa holders working in sectors critical to the delivery of goods and services, to extend their stay in Australia. As a result, from 19 August 2020, the definition of 'specified work' for WHMs was expanded to include critical COVID-19-related work in the healthcare and medical sectors anywhere in Australia.

73. From 19 January 2022, until 30 June 2023, all WHMs are also exempt from the six-month work limitation with one employer in all sectors. WHM visa holders do not have to work at all while in Australia, and are not limited in the work they can undertake. The program encourages work in regional areas, particularly in the agricultural sector, to help with seasonal work.

74. The Department provides information to WHM applicants and visa holders directly, and on its website, in relation to working conditions and protections. WHM visa holders are subject to the same employment laws and enforcement/complaints mechanisms as Australian workers. While there are no employer

sponsorship requirements for WHM visa holders, employers are subject to the ‘Employer’ scheme (see the ‘Migrant worker exploitation’ section).

Figure 5 Working Holiday Maker visa trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Temporary Skilled Work

75. The Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa was introduced in March 2018 to replace the Temporary Work (Skilled) (subclass 457) visa. The program is designed to meet genuine skills shortages without undercutting local employment, wages and conditions.
76. The TSS visa is underpinned by an integrity framework which includes ongoing sponsorship obligations for employers, to ensure overseas workers are protected from exploitation.
77. The TSS visa enables employers to meet their workforce needs by bringing skilled workers from overseas where they cannot recruit an appropriately skilled Australian worker. TSS visa holders can work in Australia in their nominated occupation for their approved sponsor under the short term, medium term or Labour Agreement stream of the program.
78. Under the TSS visa, occupations are identified as belonging to the Short-term Skilled Occupation List, the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List or the Regional Occupation List. The last update to the Skilled Migration Occupation Lists occurred in 11 March 2019, based on consultation and labour market analysis by the then National Skills Commission. Government has outlined a direction to build a temporary skilled pathway to bring in the core skills needed, using an improved approach to determining skills needed currently and in future – doing away with outdated, inflexible lists.
79. While TSS visa holders help fill critical workforce shortages, ABS Labour Force Survey data indicates that on average, across all industries and occupations, the number of primary TSS (and former subclass 457) visa holders in Australia represents less than one per cent of employed persons¹¹. The 15 most frequently nominated occupations are listed in Table 6.
80. All businesses nominating overseas workers for temporary or permanent sponsored visas are required to pay a Skilling Australia Fund (SAF) levy. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations manages a national partnership that provides SAF funding to the States and Territories.
81. Demand for the TSS visa fell as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but is now recovering to pre-pandemic levels (see Table 7). TSS applications from those outside Australia are now being prioritised to enable more workers enter Australia to contribute to labour market.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 6202.0 – Labour Force, Australia, February 2020, Australian Government.

Table 6 Most frequently nominated occupations for Temporary Skill Shortage visa, 2021-22 and 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

	Nominated Occupation	2021-22 to 31 March 2022	2022-23 to 31 March 2023	% change from 2021-22	2022-23 as % of total
1	261313 Software Engineer	2,012	2,475	23%	6.3%
2	351311 Chef	1,501	1,860	24%	4.7%
3	261111 ICT Business Analyst	731	1,633	123%	4.1%
4	253112 Resident Medical Officer	1,252	1,495	19%	3.8%
5	261312 Developer Programmer	822	1,076	31%	2.7%
6	321211 Motor Mechanic (General)	311	935	201%	2.4%
7	224711 Management Consultant	384	784	104%	2.0%
8	221213 External Auditor	445	747	68%	1.9%
9	351411 Cook	261	691	165%	1.8%
10	221111 Accountant (General)	732	682	-7%	1.7%
11	141111 Café or Restaurant Manager	280	651	133%	1.6%
12	225113 Marketing Specialist	384	607	58%	1.5%
13	Specified in Labour Agreement	182	591	225%	1.5%
14	261311 Analyst Programmer	539	534	-1%	1.4%
15	263212 ICT Support Engineer	246	531	116%	1.3%
16	Other occupation	12,704	24,168	90%	61.2%
Total		22,786	39,460	73%	100.0%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

82. On 27 April 2023, the Government announced an increase in the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) from \$53,900 to \$70,000. Increasing the TSMIT ensures the skilled visa program is targeted at highly skilled workers, and ensures migrants entering Australia have sufficient income to support themselves and their families.

83. In addition, the Government announced expanded pathways to permanent residence. By the end of 2023, the Temporary Residence Transition (TRT) stream of the Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) visa will be available for all TSS visa holders whose employers wish to sponsor them. The changes will provide more equitable access to permanent residence and provide more certainty to TSS visa holders and their employers about the permanent residence pathways available.

Table 7 Number of Temporary Resident (skilled) primary visa applications lodged, with changes between 2020-21 and 2021-22 and year to date 2022-23 (31 March 2023)

Visa category	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Difference	% Change	2022-23 (to 31/03/2023)
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	36,334	27,190	35,850	8,660	32%	33,452

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement

84. On 5 May 2023 Minister Giles announced a new tripartite approach to address workforce shortages in aged care through the creation of the new Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement.
85. Access to the Agreement will be provided to employers who have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the relevant industry union. The agreement will be negotiated directly between unions and employers, promoting transparency and collaboration across the sector.
86. The new agreement will streamline recruitment of qualified direct care workers for the Aged Care Sector and is carefully designed to create positive incentives for aged care providers to improve workforce conditions and deliver additional support to overseas workers. It also offers a flexible, expedited two-year pathway to permanent residence.

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

87. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is a temporary migration program which allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from nine Pacific Island countries¹², and Timor-Leste. The scheme allows eligible workers from these countries to work in Australia on a seasonal (up to 9 months) and longer term (up to 4 years) work placement.
88. The main aim of the scheme is to meet labour demand in Australia, enhance people-to-people connections with Pacific family, support increased migrant income and investments in their country and add human capital when migrants return home.
89. The PALM scheme is demand driven and open to eligible employers in all sectors in rural and regional Australia. Agriculture, hospitality, tourism, and the care sectors have growing opportunities for Pacific Island and Timor-Leste citizens. The Australian Government is working to provide a greater range of jobs under the PALM scheme to support workers acquire skills and experience, for example, in the mining sector, facilities management and a range of trades.
90. The Government has brought in reform measures in 2023 to protect migrant workers from exploitation. The Government will provide access to Medicare for the initial 200 families who will participate in the PALM scheme family accompaniment pilot.
91. Through this family accompaniment pilot, eligible PALM workers on long-term placements of between one and four years will be able to bring their immediate family to Australia. Their dependents will be able to live, work and study in Australia, and school-age children will have access to Australian schools. Eligible PALM scheme families will also have access to financial assistance while in Australia, including the Australian Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy.
92. The Government has met its target of 35,000 PALM scheme workers currently in Australia. In its 2023-24 Budget, delivered on 9 May, the Government announced its commitment to further expand and improve the PALM scheme. In summary, the Government will:
 - strengthen oversight of domestic operations as part of improved support for PALM scheme workers
 - responsibly grow the PALM scheme and better support employers and participating countries
 - support more than 1,000 PALM scheme workers to attain formal qualifications over 4 years
 - increase support to make it easier for PALM scheme workers to access their superannuation savings when they return home
 - provide access to Medicare for an initial 200 families who will participate in the Government's family accompaniment pilot.

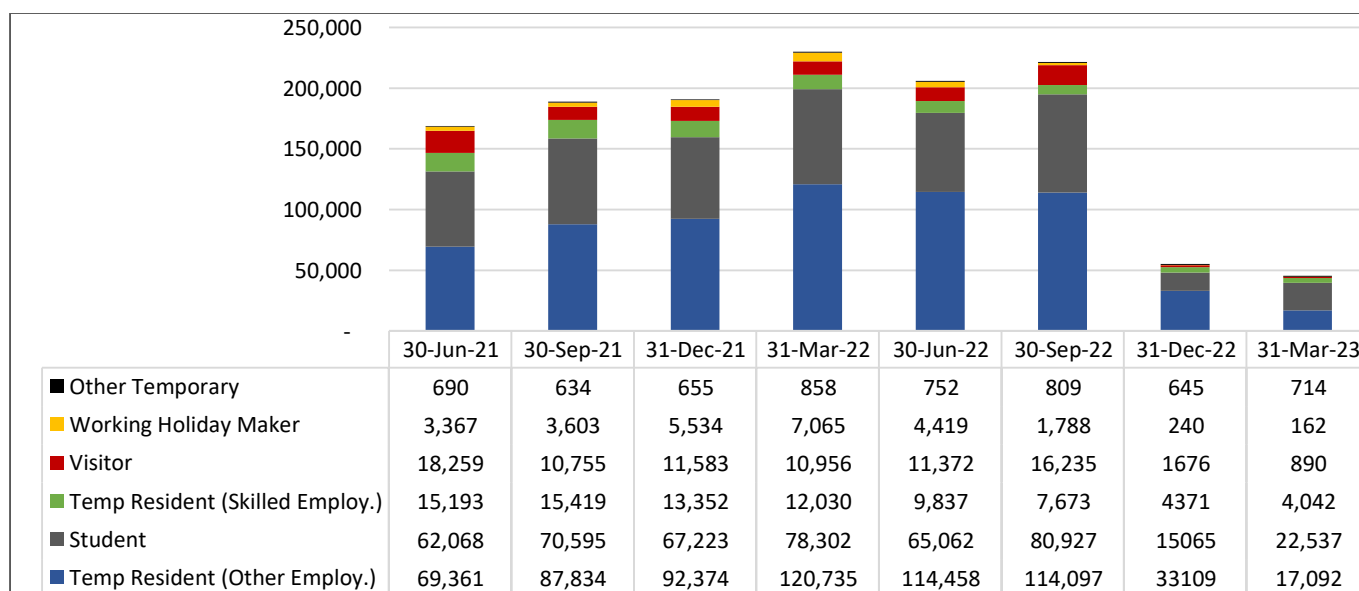
¹² Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

93. Demand from employers seeking to join the scheme continues to grow each year. Just over 71 per cent (25,820) of PALM scheme workers directly work in agriculture and 24 per cent (8,874) in food processing (meat works).

Bridging visas

94. Bridging visas enable a non-citizen to maintain their lawful status while they stay in Australia for a range of legitimate purposes, including:
- applying for a visa in Australia, or while they seek to temporarily travel overseas during the visa application process
 - appealing a decision to refuse their visa application through merits or judicial review
 - recovering from a human trafficking or slavery-related offence and (if they choose to) assisting an Australian Federal Police (AFP) investigation
 - making arrangements to leave Australia.

Figure 6 Bridging visa A, B and C holders in Australia by temporary visa category applied for 30 June 2021 to 31 March 2023¹³

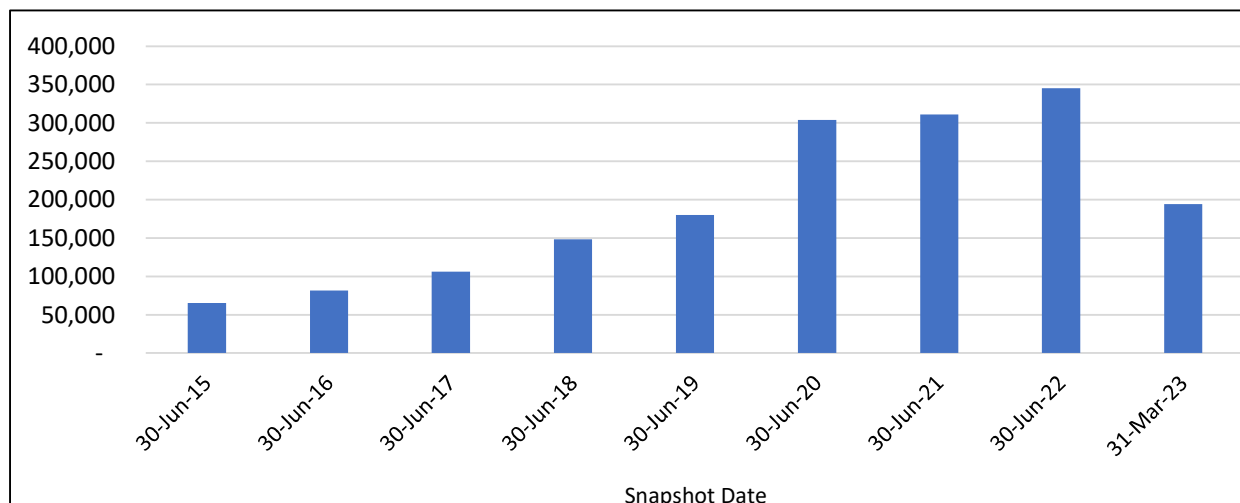


Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

95. Bridging visas will generally cease on departure from Australia unless the person holds a Bridging Visa B (BVB). A BVB visa permits the holder to depart and return to Australia within a prescribed period stated in the visa type.
96. Where a person is not eligible to be granted a Bridging visa through normal visa application processes, they may seek Ministerial Intervention.
97. The number of Bridging visa holders (excluding Bridging E visas (subclasses 050 and 051)) decreased by 37.6 per cent between 30 June 2021 and 31 March 2023 due to increased numbers of onshore visa applications being finalised. On 31 March 2023, there were 193,988 Bridging visa holders (excluding Bridging E visa holders) in Australia (see Figure 7). For more information on Bridging E visas, refer to the 'Status resolution' section.

¹³ Excludes Bridging Visa E (subclass 050 and 051) holders.

Figure 7 Number of bridging visa holders in Australia, 30 June 2015 to 31 March 2023¹⁴



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2023**

98. In general, as the total number of temporary visa holders increases, more substantive visa applications are received from individuals seeking to stay longer in Australia who are granted a Bridging visa while they await a decision. As of 31 March 2023, 37 per cent of Bridging visa holders (excluding Bridging Visa E holders) had applied for permanent migration, 34 per cent had applied for a Protection visa, 28 per cent had applied for a temporary visa, and one per cent had been granted a Bridging visa for other reasons. These bridging visa holders are at all stages of processing, and may include awaiting a primary decision from the Department (merits review or judicial review).

Applications for merits review

99. Non-citizens who apply for merits review of the Department's decision to refuse or cancel a visa, may be granted a bridging visa to remain in Australia during that process. Most applications for merits review are dealt with in the Migration and Refugee Division (MRD) of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

100. The number of active matters in the MRD's caseload remains high, particularly for applications undergoing review of Protection visa related decisions. As of 31 March 2023, 51,417 Bridging visa holders were awaiting a review of a migration and refugee visa-related decision. This is a small decrease from the 51,681 seeking review as of 30 June 2022.

Domestic and Family Violence visa and coordination support

101. The Department of Home Affairs established a dedicated Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) support team on 1 July 2021 to support temporary visa holders experiencing DFV. This team complements the Department of Social Services' *Temporary visa holders experiencing violence* pilot program, which assists temporary visa holders experiencing DFV with provision of financial, legal and migration advice support.

102. The Government provided an additional \$1.1 million funding in the 2023-24 Budget to extend the DFV support team for an additional year. The role of the DFV support team is to:

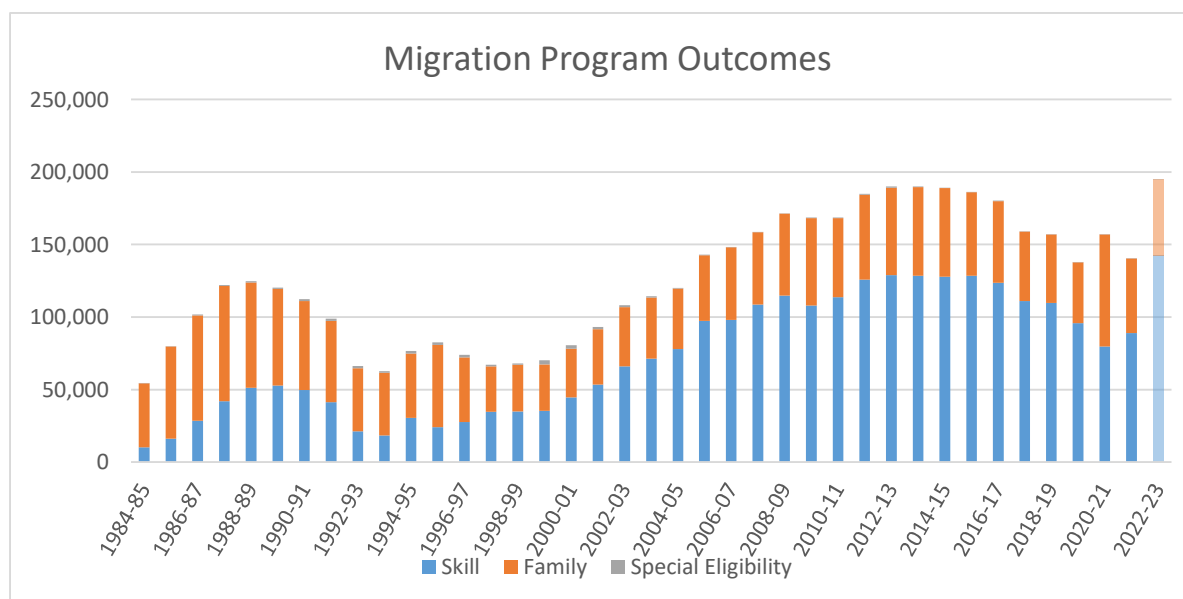
- provide a centralised point of contact for DFV support services
- coordinate and triage visa applications for victims of DFV, with a view to assisting them to regularise their visa status under the migration law framework
- gather and analyse data and feedback to inform future policy responses to further assist temporary visa holder victims of DFV.

¹⁴ Excludes Bridging Visa E (subclass 050 and 051) holders, includes applicants for permanent and temporary visas.

Migration Program

103. The permanent Migration Program is designed to meet Australia’s economic, demographic and labour market needs, with focus on skilled migration. The Migration Program is comprised of three key streams: the Skill stream, the Family stream and the (much smaller) Special Eligibility stream.
104. The Government decides the number of places for these programs, setting planning levels as part of the annual Budget process (see Figure 8 for planning levels).
105. A carefully managed Migration Program aims to rebuild Australia’s skilled cohort and support Australia’s commitment to family reunification.
106. The planning level for the 2023-24 permanent Migration Program has been set at 190,000 places. The exceptions are Partner and Child visas which are demand driven and planning levels are estimates only.

Figure 8 Migration Program outcomes by stream, 1984-85 to 2021-22 with 2022-23 Planning Levels



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2022

107. Within the Migration Program, the number of places allocated to migrants of different countries can change over time due to a variety of factors, including lodgement rates and changes in planning levels for different migration streams. The 10 most common citizenships in the 2021-22 Migration Program compared with previous years are set out in Table 9. This table will be updated at the end of the 2022-23 Program year.

Table 8 Migration Program planning levels and program outcomes, 2020-21 to 2023-24

Category	2020-21 Planning Levels	2020-21 Program Outcomes	2021-22 Planning Levels	2021-22 Program Outcomes	2022-23 Planning Levels	2023-2024 Planning Levels
Employer Sponsored	22,000	23,503	24,000	26,103	35,000	36,825
Skilled Independent	6,500	7,213	6,500	5,864	32,100	30,375
Skilled Regional	11,200	13,585	17,700	18,223	34,000	32,300
State/Territory Nominated	11,200	14,268	17,700	19,376	31,000	30,400
Business Innovation and Investment Program	13,500	11,198	13,500	10,496	5,000	1,900
Global Talent ¹⁵	15,000	9,584	10,000	8,776	5,000	5,000
Distinguished Talent	200	269	200	225	300	300
Skill total	79,600	79,620	89,600	89,063	142,400	137,100
Partner ¹⁶	72,300	72,376	62,300	46,288	40,500	40,500
Parent	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	8,500	8,500
Other Family	500	496	500	500	500	500
Family total	77,300	77,372	67,300	51,288	52,500	52,500
Special Eligibility	100	54	100	199	100	400
Total Migration Program	157,000	157,046	157,000	140,550	192,000	187,000
Child ¹⁷	3,000	3,006	3,000	3,006	3,000	3,000
Total	160,000	160,052	160,000	143,556	195,000	190,000

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2022

Table 9 Migration Program - Top 10¹⁸ countries of citizenship, 2015-16 to 2021-22

Outcome ¹⁹	Program Year					
Citizenship Country ²⁰	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
India	38,854	33,310	33,611	25,698	21,791	24,324
China, Peoples Republic of (excl SARs ²¹)	28,293	25,145	24,282	18,587	22,207	18,240
United Kingdom	17,038	13,654	13,689	10,681	12,703	9,584
Philippines	12,209	10,610	9,159	8,965	11,058	8,591
Nepal	4,290	3,067	4,096	5,048	4,714	6,628
Vietnam	5,493	5,124	5,532	5,398	8,120	6,492
New Zealand	0	5,295	6,209	4,997	3,978	4,421
Hong Kong (SAR of the PRC)	1,795	1,928	1,647	1,391	4,312	4,237
Pakistan	6,556	6,235	4,739	4,136	4,121	3,734
South Africa	4,589	4,235	3,861	3,743	3,523	3,305
Other	64,491	53,814	53,498	51,722	63,525	54,000
Total	183,608	162,417	160,323	140,366	160,052	143,556

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2022

¹⁵ Commenced in the 2019-20 program year.¹⁶ For 2023-24, delivery of the Partner visa category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only.¹⁷ For 2023-24, delivery of the Child visa category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only.¹⁸ Top 10 grouping based on 2020-22 outcome.¹⁹ Includes primary and secondary applicants.²⁰ New Zealand grants were not counted toward the Migration Program outcome prior to 2017-18.²¹ SAR - Special Administrative Regions

Skilled Migration Program

108. The Skill stream of the Migration Program is designed to meet Australia's economic, demographic, and labour market needs. It provides for the entry of migrants with higher-than-average labour force participation and specialist skills in demand. Skilled migrants contribute to building a resilient Australian economy by bringing new knowledge and skills, innovations and new technology for businesses, and enhancing connections in a globalised market to boost productivity as it transitions to net-zero. Skilled visas specifically for regional Australia help to meet workforce shortages in designated regions.
- Modelling by the Productivity Commission²² has found that increasing the share of migrants with higher skilled occupations increases Australia's real GDP per person.
 - The 2022 Population Statement from Treasury's Centre for Population notes that the emphasis on skilled migration leads to the selection of migrants who are younger than the Australian average, and of an age more likely to have children. This approach to migration can help offset the consequences of an aging population²³.
 - Skilled migrants contribute more to Government revenue through taxation than they receive through government services and benefits.²⁴
109. Skilled migration visa settings are designed to safeguard the jobs of Australian workers by only granting visas to migrants in highly skilled occupations where the skilling of Australians is not yet able to keep pace with industry demands. Policy settings aim to ensure skilled migration complements, not replaces, domestic employment and training initiatives to meet skill needs. It also addresses the challenges of persistent and emerging skilled labour shortages as the country builds domestic pipeline of highly skilled Australian workers.
110. The Skill stream includes the following visa categories:
- General skilled migration, where skilled workers who do not have an employer sponsoring them, but possess desirable skills, attributes and social capital, and who are able to pass the points test. This category includes the skilled independent and State and Territory nominated visas
 - Employer sponsored migration, where applicants are sponsored by an employer. This category includes regional employer sponsored visas and visas granted under a Labour Agreement
 - Business and investment migration, which encourages successful entrepreneurs and business people to settle in Australia, develop new business opportunities and support the innovation ecosystem
 - Global and Distinguished Talent, for exceptional individuals who are internationally recognised as outstanding in their field.
111. The composition of Skilled migration program outcomes by category are outlined in Figure 9.
112. The 2023-24 Skill stream has been set at 137,100 places, or 72% of the overall Migration Program.
113. The composition of the Skill stream is designed to address structural skill deficits and inject diverse skills and innovative thinking into the labour market to boost productivity and continue our strong post-pandemic recovery.

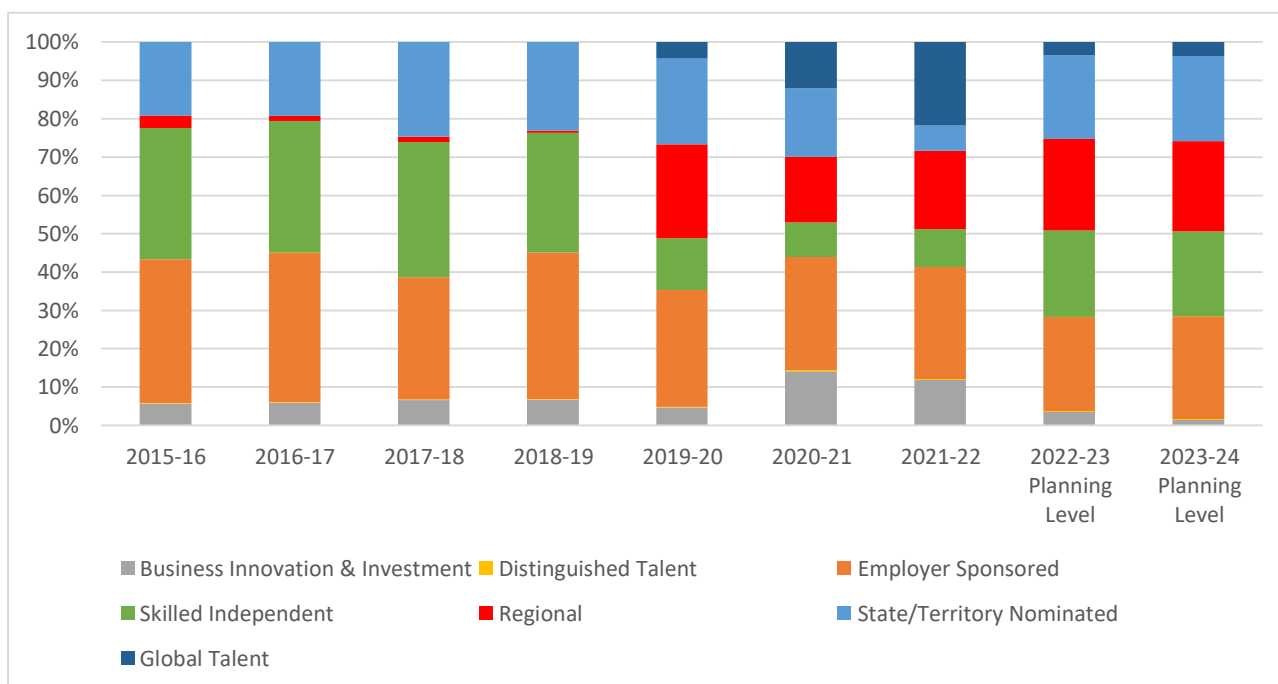
²² Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia, Inquiry Report No. 77-Technical Supplement B-The economy wide impacts of migration – general equilibrium modelling*, Australian Government.

²³ The Treasury (2021), *2021 Intergenerational Report*, Australian Government.

²⁴ The Treasury (2021), *The lifetime fiscal impact of the Australian permanent migration program*, Australian Government.

114. Within the Skill stream, the planned allocation for Employer Sponsored visas has increased to help employers hire workers. This will enable Australian businesses to operate at full capability and fill vacancies where suitably qualified Australian workers are scarce. For 2023-24, the number of Skilled Independent visa places are broadly comparable to the 2022-23 Program allocation.

Figure 9 Composition of the Skilled Migration Program outcomes, 2015-16 to 2021-22 and planning levels (2022-23 and 2023-24)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

115. The 2023-24 Migration Program maintains a strong focus on State and Territory Nominated and Regional visas to:

- enable jurisdictions to nominate visa applicants who can best meet local and regional needs and better support jurisdictions to retain temporary migrants who have worked or studied in their jurisdiction
- alleviate workforce shortage pressures in regional Australia by helping regional employers be more competitive in attracting and retaining skilled workers.

116. The planning level (2023-24) for the Global Talent Program has been maintained at the 2022-23 allocation. This ensures Australia continues to be a competitive destination to internationally mobile exceptional talent where skills and experience support long-term growth and productivity benefits through innovation and entrepreneurialism.

117. The planning level (2023-24) for the Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP) has been reduced. This reduction gives the Migration Program a greater focus on addressing immediate workforce shortages while still providing visa places to migrants who can best contribute to Australia's economic growth and whose innovations can increase the productivity of Australian businesses.

Employer Sponsorship

118. The Employer Sponsored program drives high workforce participation and provides businesses with access to critical skills where skilled Australian workers are scarce.

119. On 1 July 2022, changes were implemented to allow expanded eligibility for permanent residence for certain temporary skilled visa holders who have worked in Australia through the COVID-19 pandemic who have an occupation on the Short-Term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL), or who no longer meet the age requirements for the permanent Employer Nomination Scheme.

120. Ministerial Direction 100 came into effect on 28 October 2022, giving effect to Government priorities for certain skilled nomination and visa applications. Ministerial Direction 100 effectively ceased the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List (PMSOL) which was initially introduced in September 2020 as a temporary measure to prioritise occupations considered critical for economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. The Department's ability to prioritise certain occupations is better managed through the use of Ministerial Direction 100, which has reduced the number of priorities, but has increased efficiencies in visa processing.

Regional Migration

121. Migration to regional Australia assists in meeting local workforce and demographic needs. Temporary, provisional and permanent regional skilled visa options are available. In 2022-23, 34,000 places have been allocated for Regional visas.

Table 10 Number of applications lodged for Regional visas, 2021-22 and 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Visa	2021-22	2022-23 (to 31/03/2023)
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)	26,314	25,845
Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 494)	3,165	2,619
Total	29,479	28,464

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

122. From 18 February 2022, the former Government extended the duration of Skilled Regional (Provisional) visas (subclasses 489, 491 and 494) for three years. These extensions applied to eligible visa holders affected by COVID-19 international travel restrictions, and provided additional time for this cohort to live and work in regional Australia and be eligible for permanent residence.

123. From November 2021 more flexible concessions were introduced into the dairy, fishing, horticulture, meat and pork labour agreements in regional areas.

Table 11 Number of applications finalised for Regional visas, 2021-22 and 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Visa	Outcome	2021-22	2022-23 (to 31/03/2023)
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)	Granted	13,898	18,752
	Refused and Withdrawn	912	4,023
	Sub total	14,810	22,775
Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 494)	Granted	1,348	2,544
	Refused and Withdrawn	177	380
	Sub total	1,525	2,924
Total		16,335	25,699

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Designated Area Migration Agreements

124. Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs) are tailored agreements that enable designated regions to respond to their unique economic circumstances and workforce shortages by accessing overseas workers for skilled or semi-skilled occupations.

125. A DAMA is a two-tier framework covering a defined regional area. The first tier is an overarching five-year deed of agreement between the Australian Government and a Designated Area Representative. The second comprises individual Labour Agreements with employers using the setting of the overarching agreement.
126. Employers can sponsor workers via a DAMA Labour Agreement for temporary, provisional or permanent visas (depending on the circumstances), with a range of concessions not available under the standard visa programs. Some standard requirements must be met, such as (but not limited to) payment of the SAF levy and demonstrating a genuine labour market need.
127. Twelve DAMAs are in place: Adelaide City, South Australia (SA); East Kimberley, Western Australia (WA); Far North Queensland; Goulburn Valley Region, Victoria; Great South Coast, Victoria; Northern Territory; Orana, New South Wales; Pilbara, WA; South Australia Regional, SA; Southwest, WA; the Goldfields region, WA; and Townsville, Queensland.
128. As of 31 March 2023, 946 labour agreement requests had been lodged under DAMAs, with 654 in effect (executed) as of that date. The number of nominations available for overseas workers under each exiting DAMA ranges from 200 to 1000 per year. A total of 1524 visa, i.e., 740 primary and 784 dependents, have been granted under a DAMA.
129. The number of visa grants under each DAMA reflects individual employer demand in designated areas. In some circumstances, there are long lead times for newly established DAMAs, as this is dependent on the participation of employers. The Department's experience is that DAMAs take time to become established within a region as employers become familiar with the agreement first, before requesting a labour agreement.

Family Program

130. Australia's Family Migration Program facilitates the reunification of family members of settled Australian citizens, permanent residents and eligible New Zealand citizens (Australian sponsors). Family migration plays an important role in delivering social outcomes for Australia and contributes to social cohesion by strengthening family and community bonds in Australia.
131. The permanent Family Migration Program is comprised of four categories:
- the Partner category, which allows Australian sponsors to sponsor their spouse, de facto partner or prospective partner to live in Australia
 - the Parent category, which is comprised of Non-Contributory and Contributory Parent visas, allowing for parents to stay in Australia with their Australian sponsor children
 - the Other Family category, which allows family members to sponsor carers, remaining relatives and aged dependent relatives to live with them in Australia
 - the Child category, which allows parents to sponsor their dependent or adopted child to live with them in Australia.

Family Migration: Capping and queuing and priority processing

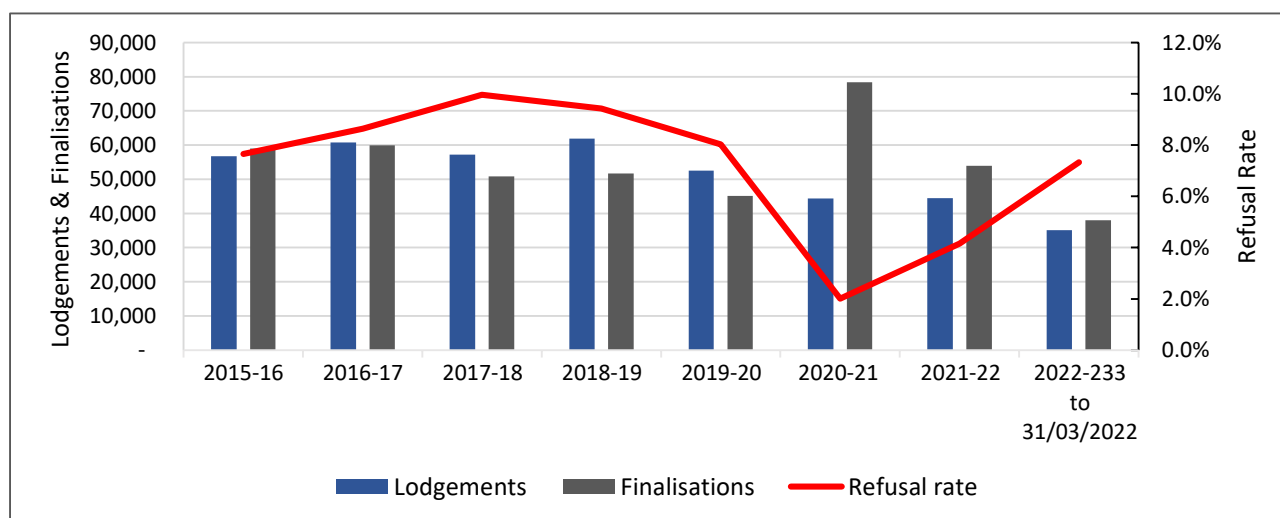
132. Section 85 of the *Migration Act 1958* (the Migration Act) allows the Minister to determine the maximum number of visas which may be granted in each program year in certain visa classes. If a visa class has been 'capped', this means that if the number of visas granted within that year reaches the maximum number determined by the Minister, no more visas of that class may be granted in that year. Those visa applications will be 'queued' for further processing in the following program year.
133. The 'cap and queue' power allows the annual Migration Program to be managed more efficiently by:
- limiting the number of visas that may be granted under a specific class, while queueing additional applications that meet the core criteria for possible visa grant in a later year

- ensuring that applications which do not meet the core criteria for a visa can be refused and do not remain in the queue for years before a decision is made on their application.
134. Section 87 of the Migration Act prevents capping of the Partner or Child visa categories. There is, however, scope in administering the program to consider planning levels and prioritising processing accordingly.
135. Ministerial Direction 102 provides the order for considering and disposing of Family visa applications and reflects the Government's policy intentions in relation to the size, composition and integrity of the Migration Program, and the management of Australia's borders.
136. The Direction sets out the Family Program processing priorities from highest to lowest as follows:
- Applications where the Minister has exercised powers of intervention under sections 351 and 417 of the Migration Act
 - Partner, Prospective Marriage and Child visa applications
 - Orphan Relative visa applicants
 - Contributory Parent and Contributory Aged Parent visa applications
 - Carer visa applications
 - Parent, Aged Parent, Remaining Relative and Aged Dependent Relative visa applications.

Partner visas

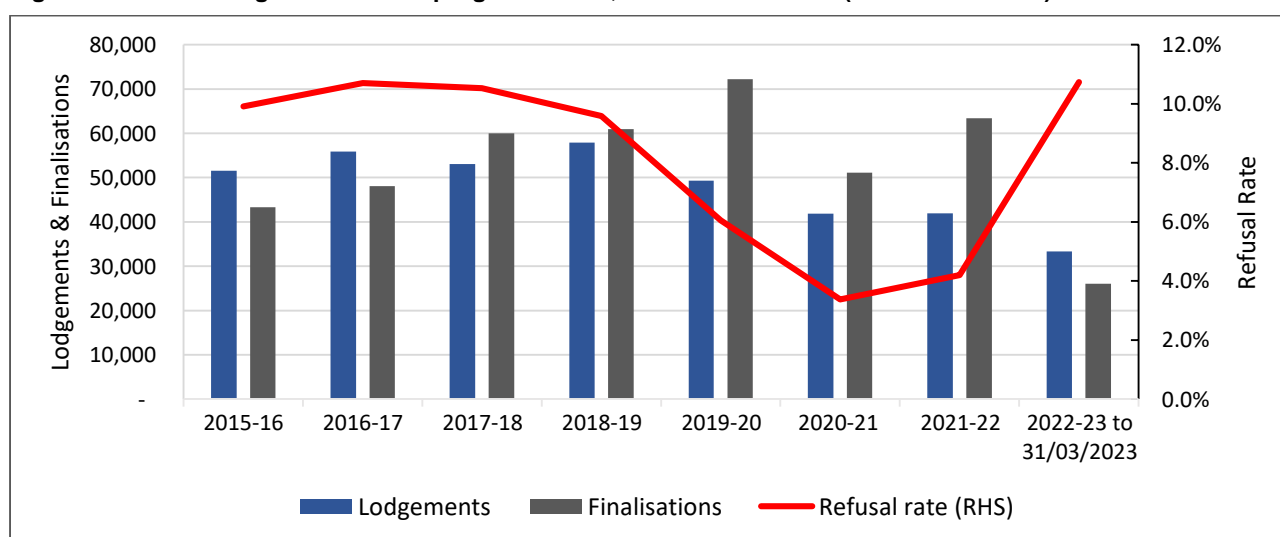
137. The Partner visa category has become a demand-driven model from 2022-23. The arrangements provide the flexibility to adjust the annual supply of planned places to meet the expected demand for Partner visas in a given program year, resulting in more efficient management of the Partner visa pipeline and processing times. The Partner category continues to make up the majority of Australia's Family Migration Program.
138. Reduction of Partner on-hand visa applications is an ongoing priority for the Department. In 2022-23, as of 31 March 2023, the Department granted 33,530 first stage Partner visas, with around 54,500 applications remaining on-hand.
139. Partner visa grant numbers are expected to increase over the course of 2022-23. New processing staff are being recruited and trained across our global network of offices. The ongoing work of a specialised complex case team established in September 2021, is also contributing to a reduction in the number of older on-hand cases.
140. Partner visas are subject to a two-stage processing arrangement, with applicants lodging an application for a temporary and permanent Partner visa at once. The two-stage model ensures that only applicants in genuine and ongoing relationships are eligible for the benefits of permanent residence. As part of the two-stage process, most applicants become eligible to be considered for the permanent visa two years after lodgment of the combined application. Partner visa applicants must meet all requirements set out in migration legislation, including assessment of their relationship, character, identity, health and security criteria.
141. In 2022-23 as of 31 March 2023, nearly 21,680 second stage Partner visas were granted.

Figure 10 First Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015-16 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Figure 11 Second Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015-16 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Parent visas

142. In 2022-23 planning for Parent visas has increased to 8,500 places from 4,500 in 2021-22.
143. Parent category applications are subject to capping and queueing arrangements. Parent visa applications progress to a queue assessment in the order they are received. However, where an existing applicant for a Parent or Aged Parent visa applies for a Contributory (Aged) Parent visa, the date of lodgement will be the date of lodgement of the new Contributory (Aged) Parent visa application.
144. The Parent queue is ongoing and establishes an order of precedence that can stretch many years into the future. When a visa place becomes available under the Migration Program, applications are released for final processing in order of the queue date allocated to an application (other than where the Minister has exercised an intervention power under sections 351 or 417 of the Migration Act to grant a visa, or where the Administrative Appeals Tribunal has remitted the application to the Department).
145. The Department releases more applications from the queue than there are places available under the Migration Program to account for the fact that some applicants may not be able to satisfy the outstanding visa requirements and will no longer be eligible to be granted a visa. Consequently, there is no guarantee that the visa will be granted within the same program year as an application is released from the queue.

Sponsored Parent (Temporary) visa

146. The Sponsored Parent Temporary Visa (SPTV) provides a short-term family reunification option for parents of Australian sponsors. The SPTV is a temporary visa and is not subject to the capping and queuing arrangement.

Child visas

147. The Child category in the Migration Program allows children to be sponsored to live permanently in Australia. Generally, children are sponsored by their biological or adoptive parents. Some orphaned children are sponsored by other relatives, and a small cohort of children are also processed under provisions for vulnerable children who are under the care of a State or Territory Government Welfare Authority, including as a result of court orders giving parental authority to a Welfare Authority.

Processing times

148. Processing times for the Family Stream are impacted by a range of factors, including the number of places the Government allocates to a program each year, and the level of demand for each visa category.

Family Violence Provisions

149. The Family Violence Provisions (FVPs), which currently apply to certain Partner and Global Talent visas, enable visa applicants to remain eligible for the grant of a permanent visa even if their relationship with the sponsoring partner or the primary applicant ends due to DFV. They aim to ensure that visa applicants do not feel compelled to stay in a violent relationship in order to be granted a permanent visa.
150. In the 2022-23 program year (as at 31 March 2023), 515 primary Partner visa applicants sought access to the family violence provisions and 431 permanent Partner visas were granted based on claims of family violence.
151. In August 2022, the Migration Regulations (1994) were amended to enable offshore Partner visa applicants, who have been, or are eligible to be granted a visa in Australia under the COVID-19 concession, to access the Family Violence Provisions.
152. A new legislative instrument, *Migration (Specification of evidentiary requirements—family violence) Instrument 2023 (LIN 23/026)*, which specifies the evidence that must be provided for a non-judicially determined claim of family violence, commenced on 31 March 2023.
153. As part of the 2023-24 Budget, the Government has allocated \$8.9 million to expand the FVPs to secondary applicants for most permanent visas and additional cohorts of Partner visa applicants.

Relationship between temporary and permanent migration

154. Temporary migrants are a major source of permanent Skill stream visa applications, with a number of visas providing a pathway from temporary to permanent residence for those who have demonstrated their ability to contribute to the Australian economy.
155. Within the Skill stream, the Employer Sponsored and Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional categories were most reliant on applications made by Temporary Work visa holders. The Graduate and Student visa holders comprised a significant proportion of visa grants for the State/Territory Nominated and Skilled Independent categories (see Figure 12).

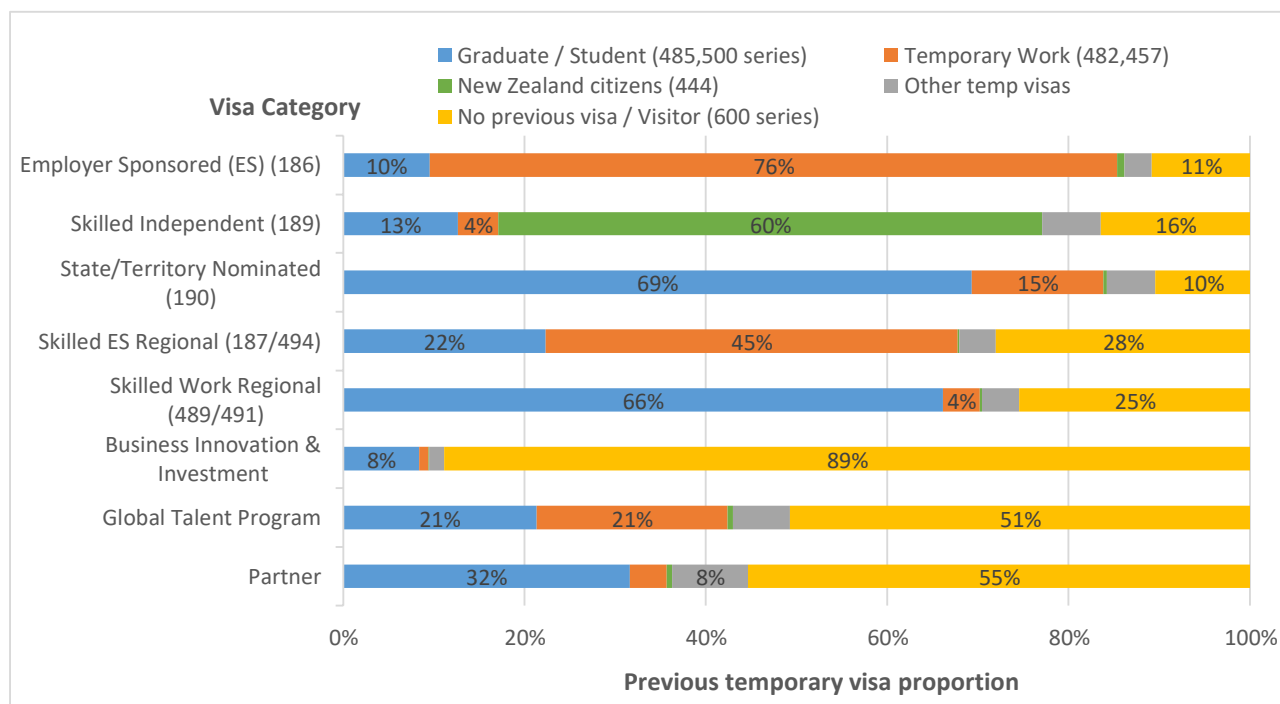
Table 12 Number of permanent primary visa applications lodged by client location, 2021-22 and year to date 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

	2021-22			2022-23 to 31/03/2022		
Visa category	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total
Child	893	2,747	3,640	1,419	2,337	3,756
Family	54,522	35,570	90,092	46,260	27,402	73,662
Other Permanent	19	104	123	2,318	102	2,420
Resident Return/ADV	107,333	37,522	144,855	134,665	36,420	171,085
Skilled	53,237	10,009	63,246	58,825	20,502	79,327
Special Eligibility	103	<5	107	38	7	45
Total	216,107	85,952	302,063	243,525	86,770	330,295

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

156. From 2022-23, the number of lodgements under the Skill stream applicants residing outside of Australia has increased, due to the Government's focus on attracting offshore migrants through visa processing settings and talent attraction and outreach programs.

Figure 12 Proportion of permanent visas granted where a temporary visa was previously held, 2021-22



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2022

Humanitarian Program

157. Since the end of the Second World War, Australia has successfully settled more than 930,000 refugees and others in humanitarian need, in recognition of the valuable contribution of refugees to Australian society, culture and prosperity. The Humanitarian Program aims to:

- meet Australia's international protection obligations and positions Australia as a global leader in international resettlement efforts
- operate flexibly to respond to evolving humanitarian situations and global resettlement needs

- reunite refugees and people who are in refugee-like situations overseas with their family in Australia.

158. There are currently two components within the Humanitarian Program: the offshore component, focusing on providing permanent resettlement in Australia to refugees and people in humanitarian need outside their home country (and outside Australia); and the onshore component which is reserved for people who arrive in Australia lawfully, seek Australia's protection and are found to engage Australia's non-refoulement (non-return) obligations.

159. The 2022-23 Humanitarian Program was set at a ceiling of 17,875 places (including the 4,125 Afghan places for this program year). As of 24 March 2023, 11,650 visas were granted under the 2022-23 Humanitarian Program.

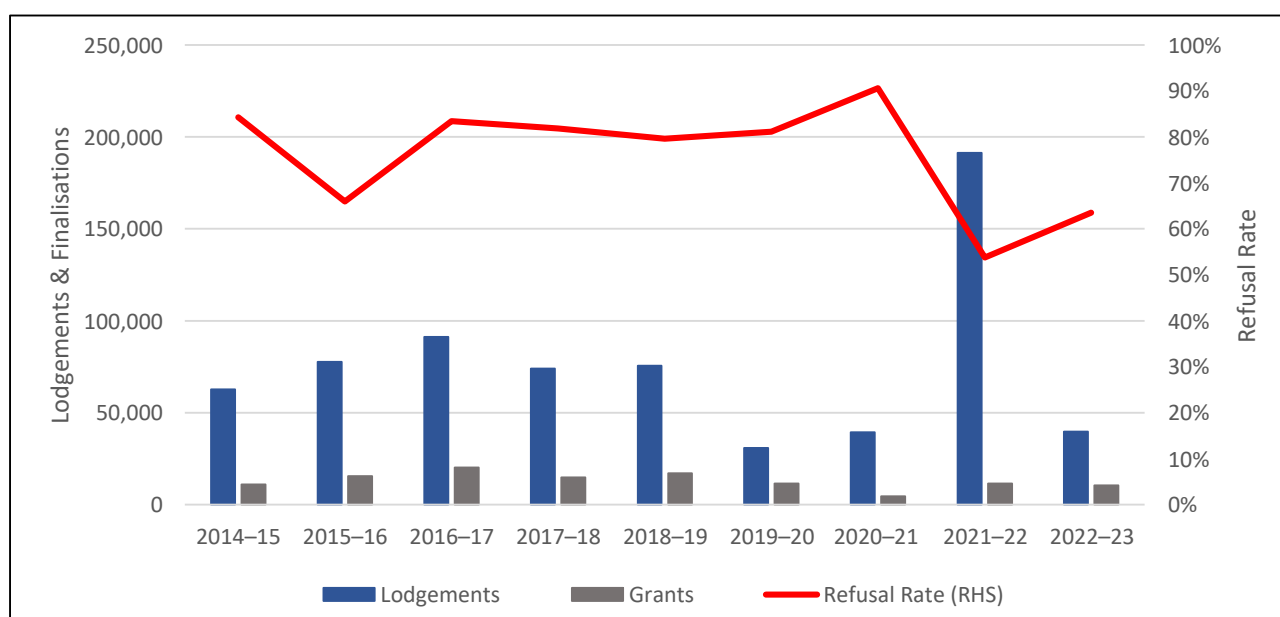
160. The Government aspires to gradually increase the size of the Humanitarian Program and return the annual Program planning levels to a target rather than a ceiling.

Offshore Humanitarian visas

161. As of 31 March 2023, there were approximately 2,600 Refugee and Humanitarian (Class XB) visa holders who were granted visas between 1 July 2019 and 15 December 2021 and are yet to travel to Australia.

- Until 15 December 2021, COVID-19 border response measures prevented Offshore Humanitarian visa holders, who had not yet travelled to Australia, from entering Australia, unless granted a travel exemption on compelling and compassionate grounds
- Work continues with state and territory governments and settlement service providers to plan and facilitate a staggered increase in humanitarian arrivals of those visa holders who are offshore.

Figure 13 Offshore Humanitarian program trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Dedicated places for Afghan nationals

162. The Australian Government has allocated 31,500 permanent visa places for Afghans to migrate to Australia from 2021 to 2026:

- 10,000 places have been allocated to Afghan nationals within the offshore Humanitarian Program between 2021-22 and 2024-25.
- An additional 16,500 places for Afghan nationals have been allocated and will be delivered over four years (4,125 places per year between 2022-23 and 2025-26).

163. Afghan nationals are also able to pursue other migration pathways to Australia depending on their circumstances, including through the Community Support Program, the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot, and the Family and Skill streams of the Migration Program.
164. All visa applications will be processed in accordance with Government announcements and within program priorities, and assessed on an individual basis. In view of the high demand for the limited number of resettlement places available each year, priority will be given to former certified Locally Engaged Employees (LEEs) and their immediate family members; women and girls; ethnic minorities; LGBTQI+ and other identified minority groups who are outside Australia.

Settlement services for evacuees and humanitarian entrants

165. Humanitarian entrants are offered immediate settlement support through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) to help them access essential services and integrate into Australian life. The HSP is delivered by contracted service providers with long-standing experience working with those newly arrived in Australia.
166. Based on their individual level of assessed need, most clients continue to receive support from the HSP for up to 18 months, during which time they will be assisted to:
- find long term accommodation, and be provided with a package of basic household goods to establish their new home
 - access mainstream and specialist support services, for example family and domestic violence services
 - learn English through the Adult Migrant English Program
 - access employment services, education and training
 - complete school enrolment for children
 - connect to local community groups and activities
 - orientate to Australia, including our values and laws.
167. Humanitarian entrants including evacuees, are provided with ongoing support for up to five years through settlement grant programs. Settlement grants focus on providing services aimed at improving economic well-being, independence, personal well-being, social participation, and community connectedness, and are delivered by service providers on behalf of the Government. These include:
- the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, which provides settlement-related information, advice, advocacy, and assistance to access mainstream and other relevant services
 - the Youth Transition Support (YTS) program, which provides a range of activities to help young humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants aged 15 to 25 to build capability and resilience so that they remain engaged in education and successfully transition to employment.
168. The Government also co-funds Community Hubs in schools, focused on Humanitarian and other migrant women with young children to provide support for them to learn English, develop new skills, find employment and access Government support services.
169. On 14 October 2021, the former Government announced new funding of \$27.1 million over two years for a tailored Afghan settlement support package to help recent evacuees from Afghanistan settle successfully into their new lives in Australia. The package includes support to Afghan-Australian community organisations to deliver community-based settlement support; funding for legal services to assist evacuees to transition to permanent visas; funding for skills recognition and education pathways to help secure a suitable entry into the Australian labour market and funding for targeted mental health services through the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma.

170. The former Government also provided \$450,000 to the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, to assist with the settlement of newly arrived Ukrainian humanitarian entrants in Australia. Additionally, the former Government announced additional funding of \$550,000 to enable organisations to expand capacity to effectively respond to the needs of Ukrainian humanitarian entrants.

Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors

171. The Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM) Program provides care and accommodation to eligible non-citizen children who arrive in Australia without a parent. Some unaccompanied minors receiving services under the UHM Program are under the Minister for Immigration's guardianship under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children Act) 1946*. Currently, there are 229 minors receiving UHM Program services in Australia, 105 of whom are under the Minister's guardianship.

172. There were 76 offshore Humanitarian visa grants to unaccompanied minors in 2018-19, 40 grants in 2019-20, 7 grants in 2020-21, 106 grants in 2021-22 and 65 grants in 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023).

Onshore Protection

173. There has always been a small proportion of people who arrive in Australia on temporary visas and subsequently seek Australia's protection. In line with Australia's commitment to upholding its international protection obligations, those who seek protection undergo a thorough assessment to determine whether they engage these obligations.

174. From about 55 million temporary visas granted between 1 July 2014 and 31 March 2023, about 149,000 Protection visa applications were subsequently lodged. This equates to about 0.27 per cent of total temporary visa grants.

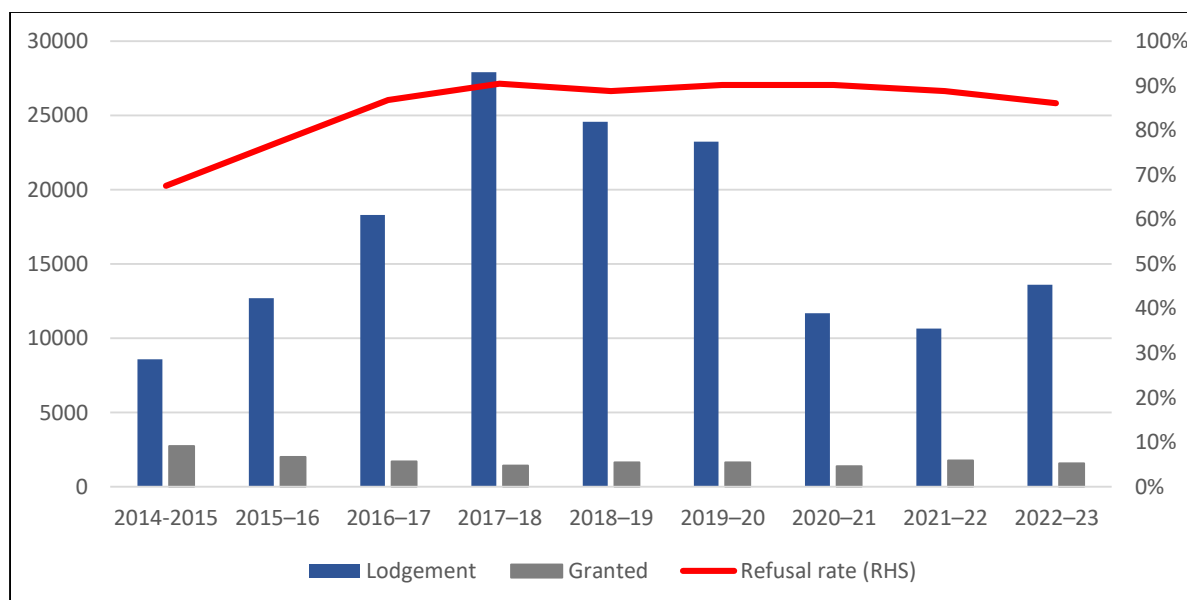
175. More than 92 per cent of the individuals who applied for protection in the same period have either departed Australia, been granted a visa, or remain lawfully in Australia while they have ongoing matters before the Department or under merits or judicial review. Individuals who do not have a valid visa and have no matters under review are expected to either voluntarily return home or be removed from Australia by the ABF.

176. Australia's experience, and that of similar countries, is that there are differing motivations for seeking protection within this caseload. While a proportion of applicants claim protection because they genuinely fear they will face serious or significant harm if returned to their home country, others apply for another purpose, including to prolong their stay to access the Australian labour market or because of the comparatively better life opportunities Australia offers.

177. The Department has consistently refused about 90 per cent of applications for a Permanent Protection visa (PPV) since 2017-18 (see Figure 14). The number of applications lodged has trended downwards since then, reflecting the implementation of strategies to prevent people from exploiting the program to prolong their stay as a consequence of COVID-19 related travel restrictions. With travel restrictions no longer in place, lodgement numbers are gradually increasing.

178. For those granted a PPV, the top ten countries of citizenship for 2020-21 until 2022-23 (as at 31 March 2023) are shown at Figure 14.

Figure 14 Onshore Protection program trends, 2014-15 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 13 Permanent protection visa grants and grant rates, 2020-21 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Citizenships (Top 10)*	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	Granted	Grant Rate	Granted	Grant Rate	Granted	Grant Rate
Iran	202	68.2%	218	80.7%	76	96.2%
China (Exc. Sar)	90	2.0%	149	3.8%	228	9.2%
Pakistan	151	42.2%	140	52.6%	124	63.9%
Afghanistan	79	84.0%	110	94.0%	54	93.1%
Turkiye	103	70.5%	93	64.1%	30	78.9%
Papua New Guinea	24	64.9%	84	50.6%	88	65.7%
Yemen	74	100.0%	79	100.0%	11	91.7%
Venezuela	51	60.0%	76	66.7%	50	98.0%
Ethiopia	13	68.4%	71	68.9%	71	82.6%
Egypt	24	63.2%	59	76.6%	18	85.7%
Other	578	...	683	...	820	...
Grand Total	1389	9.7%	1762	11.2%	1570	14.0%

*Top 10 citizenship is based on the 2021-22 program year

Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA) Legacy Caseload

179. On 13 February 2023, the Australian Government announced a permanent visa pathway for approximately 19,000 existing TPV and SHEV holders, most of whom have been living in Australia temporarily for almost a decade.
180. Resolving the status of this group while maintaining the strong border protection settings of Operation Sovereign Borders provides a human response for those who engage Australia's protection obligations, while deterring future unauthorised arrivals preventing vulnerable people from risking their lives at sea.
181. This permanent visa pathway through the Subclass 851 Resolution of Status (RoS) is only available to people who held or had applied for a TPV or SHEV on 14 February 2023.

182. As at 31 March 2023, there are 14,340 people with a RoS visa application on hand and there have been 491 RoS visa grants. Other people who may be eligible for a RoS visa include (as at 31 March 2023):
- 1,868 undecided initial TPV/SHEV applications. These persons may be eligible for a RoS visa, subject to meeting criteria for grant of their initial TPV/SHEV application.
 - 471 persons at merits review, and 4,929 at judicial review, following a TPV/SHEV refusal. Applications remitted to the Department and who are found to meet grant criteria for their TPV/SHEV visa, may be subsequently granted their RoS visa.
 - 522 former TPV/SHEV holders whose visas have expired or have been cancelled, including 263 onshore lawfully, and 259 onshore unlawfully. Subject to meeting eligibility criteria and following the lifting of relevant application bars, applicants must be in Australia to lodge a RoS visa.
183. There are also:
- 2,425 people who do not engage Australia's protection obligations as their TPV or SHEV has been refused, and those who have no ongoing matters. These persons are not eligible for a RoS visa
 - 2,367 UMA's subject to the TPV/SHEV framework prior to 14 February 2023 whose status has been resolved and are either ineligible under this measure, or unlikely to require a RoS visa. This includes Australian citizens, those who have departed Australia (1,964), are deceased, or have resolved their status via another visa grant.

Australian Citizenship Program

184. Migrants who become Australian citizens make an ongoing commitment to Australia and its values. Citizenship entails additional responsibilities to the Australian community as well as individual privileges.
185. Applications for Australian citizenship generally fall within four categories: conferral (the most common way of acquiring citizenship through application, representing approximately 90 per cent of all applications), descent, adoption and resumption.
- 167,232 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral in the 2021-22 program year, up from 140,748 in 2020-21. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 138,412 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral.

Citizenship by conferral

186. Australian citizenship by conferral is available to permanent residents and eligible New Zealand citizens who meet relevant eligibility requirements, including knowledge of Australia, language, identity and character requirements and an intention to reside in Australia.
187. More than 161,000 citizenship by conferral applications were finalised in 2021-22. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, more than 142,000 citizenship by conferral applications have been finalised, representing an increase of 27 per cent in comparison to the same period in the 2021-22 program year.

Table 14 Number of Australian citizenship by conferral applications finalised, by decision type and financial year, 2012-13 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)²⁵

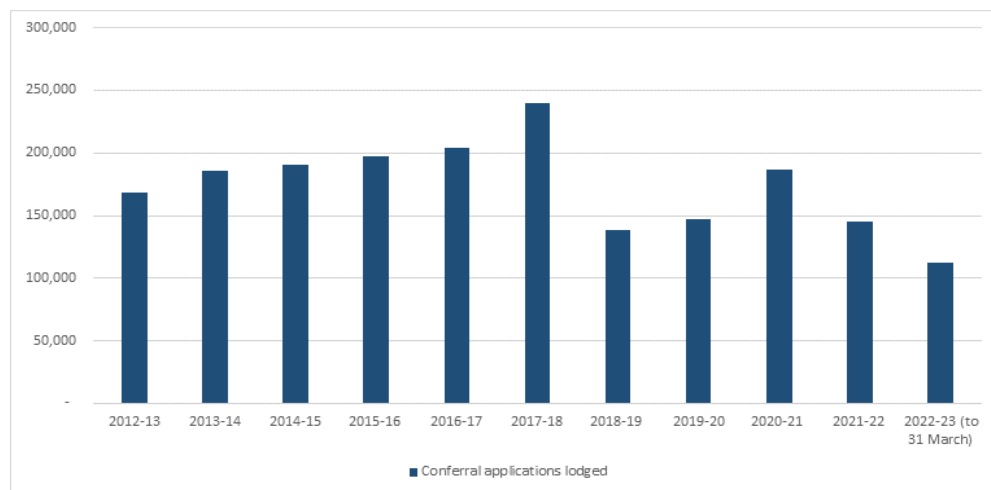
Program year	Approved	Refused	Invalid	Other ²⁶	Total
2012-13	137,079	3,270	16,561	643	157,553
2013-14	158,907	5,728	26,611	783	192,029
2014-15	148,862	5,197	34,987	795	189,841
2015-16	129,515	4,749	32,612	792	167,668
2016-17	127,013	4,089	22,035	742	153,879
2017-18	80,776	4,956	14,998	692	101,422
2018-19	145,587	7,590	5,713	1,227	160,117
2019-20	215,394	8,762	2,179	1,988	228,323
2020-21	170,645	7,957	1,782	2,831	183,215
2021-22	149,514	6,798	3,246	1,789	161,347
2022-23 (to 31 March)	132,496	6,385	2,746	815	142,442

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

188. Once citizenship is conferred, it can be revoked only in extremely limited circumstances. From July 2014 to 31 March 2023, 54 individuals had their Australian citizenship revoked for criminal conduct, including for citizenship or migration fraud.

189. There continues to be strong interest from migrants applying to become Australian citizens, with 144,763 applications for citizenship by conferral lodged in 2021-22. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 112,266 applications for citizenship by conferral were lodged.

Figure 15 Citizenship by conferral lodgement trends, 2012-13 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Citizenship by descent

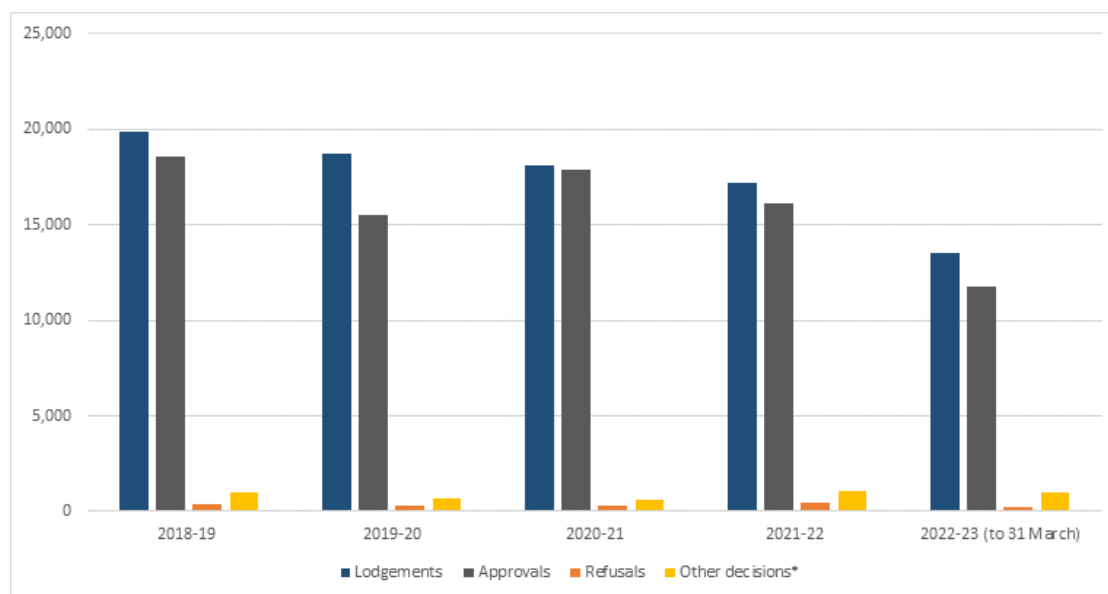
190. People born outside of Australia, who at the time of their birth had a parent who was an Australian citizen (or the parent later became an Australian citizen on 26 January 1949), may apply for Australian citizenship by descent regardless of their age.

²⁵ Data may differ from previous or other reports due to the use of dynamic database in the current financial year.

²⁶ Other includes applications withdrawn by the client and minor numbers of administrative finalisations.

191. In 2021-22, 16,123 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent (see Figure 16 below). This represents a 10 per cent decrease over the 2020-21 program year. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 11,763 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

Figure 16 Citizenship by descent applications lodged and finalised, 2018-19 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)²⁷



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

192. In 2021-22, 218 children born through surrogacy arrangements acquired Australian citizenship by descent. The main countries of birth of these children were, in numerical order, the United States of America, Ukraine, Canada, Columbia and Thailand. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 155 children born through surrogacy arrangements acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

Citizenship by adoption

193. Children adopted outside of Australia by an Australian citizen under the Hague Convention or a bilateral arrangement, can obtain Australian citizenship. Twenty-eight children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption in 2021-22, a decrease from 39 in the previous program year. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 11 children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption.

Citizenship by resumption

194. People who previously renounced their Australian citizenship, or who lost it automatically under historical provisions, may apply to resume Australian citizenship if they are of good character. In 2021-22, 60 people had resumed Australian citizenship, compared to 84 in the previous program year. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 66 people resumed Australian citizenship.

Citizenship service delivery

195. The Citizenship Program continues to reduce the number of conferral applications on-hand. The current caseload is under 100,000 applications for the first time in more than five years.

196. There were 92,216 applications for Australian citizenship by conferral on-hand on 31 March 2023, a 25 per cent decrease since 30 June 2022 and a 31 per cent decrease in the last year from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023 (133,207 applications on-hand).

197. The average processing time from lodgement to decision for applications decided in March 2023 was 236 days, a decrease of 39 per cent from March 2022 (386 days). This figure reflects the resolution of a number of long-standing citizenship applications.

²⁷ Other decisions include invalidated applications, applications withdrawn by the client and administrative finalisations.

198. The Department continues its efforts to increase citizenship test appointment availability, including in regional testing locations operated by Services Australia. Services Australia provides citizenship test services at 41 sites.
199. To address the number of approved applicants awaiting ceremonies, the Department is continuing to support and encourage local government councils to increase the number and size of the in-person ceremonies they host. In 2021-22, 165,368 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony. Of these 120,345 did so in person and 45,023 online. In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023, 137,039 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony (134,186 in person, 2,853 online).
200. In December 2022, the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code was updated to provide local government councils with flexibility to hold a citizenship ceremony to mark Australia Day on Australia Day, or on the three days prior to or after Australia Day (23 to 29 January). The confirmed total number of people who acquired Australian citizenship by conferral at a ceremony held on 26 January 2023 was 16,704.
201. From 1 July 2023, New Zealand citizens living in Australia who arrived in Australia on or after 26 February 2001 and who hold a Special Category (subclass 444) visa will be eligible for citizenship by conferral, subject to meeting other eligibility requirements. The direct pathway delivers on the Australian Government's commitment to ensure viable pathways to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens living in Australia.

Managing risk and community protection

Risk environment

202. The majority of non-citizens entering Australia are genuine entrants who comply with their visa conditions. However, visa and citizenship programs are continually tested by individuals and groups motivated by fraudulent purpose. With Australia's borders once again open, areas of risk that had been inhibited by the pandemic are re-emerging and expected to return to pre-pandemic levels.
203. Uneven economic recovery from COVID-19, particularly in regions hit hard by the pandemic, serves to 'push' migrants toward prosperous countries, such as Australia. Heightened vigilance will be required in relation to aspiring migrants who cannot meet visa criteria and who may turn to fraud, assisted by corrupt professional facilitators and people smugglers to achieve migration goals.
204. Some non-citizens who are strongly motivated to work in Australia may be manipulated and exploited by unscrupulous employers and labour hire intermediaries.
205. Political and economic instability and ongoing conflict will continue to impact refugee flows, increasing the number of people who seek to relocate both legally and illegally to safe countries, such as Australia. Individuals may have little to no reliable documentation, making it difficult to verify their identity.
206. In response, the Department uses innovative mitigation strategies, vigilance and agility to enhance, rather than constrain immigration.
207. Since 2020, the Department's risk and integrity capability has expanded through a multi-layered approach to threat detection across the border continuum, and improved partnership between program delivery and intelligence analysis areas. Data holdings and system analysis enable the Department to assess anomalies in visa and border-related transactions.
208. Intelligence-led threat detection is enhanced by collaboration with partner agencies in Australia and overseas. This cooperation provides a deeper understanding of the context and consequence of migration-related crime, expands the base used for intelligence assessments, and contributes the Department's expertise to the disruption and suppression of a range of domestic and international threats.

Biometrics and integrity screening in the Immigration Program

209. Over the past 11 years, the Department has increased its use of biometrics to facilitate legitimate trade and travel, and protect the border and community from threats including criminal activity and terrorism. Australia collects biometrics from visa applicants living in Australia and 53 other countries to detect persons of concern. The Department is expanding the biometrics collection programs to additional countries where it is safe to do so.

210. All biometrics collected from visa applicants are automatically checked against departmental data. All fingerprints collected are checked against departmental, Australian law enforcement and data held by Migration Five (M5) partners. Data sharing in 2019-20 through 2021-22 was impacted by COVID-19. The Department queried:

- 300,000 fingerprint records in 2020-21
- 1,200,000 fingerprint records in 2021-22
- For the current financial year up to 31 March 2023, the Department has queried more than 2,300,000 fingerprint records.

The Department received:

- 1,000,000 queries in 2020-21
- 2,000,000 queries in 2021-22
- For the current financial year up to 31 March 2023, the Department has received more than 1,800,000 queries.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

211. In Australia, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery are criminalised under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) Divisions 270 and 271*. Australia's human trafficking offences cover trafficking in all of its forms, including trafficking for harvesting human organs and trafficking in children. Offences of slavery-like practices include forced marriage, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage and deceptive recruitment for labour or services. The ABF employs specialist Human Trafficking Contact Officers in each state and territory. Their role is to refer all suspected cases of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like-practices to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in accordance with a joint agency *Human Trafficking, Slavery, and Slavery-like Practices Referral Protocol (Referral Protocol)*.

212. Between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Department, including the ABF, referred 22 suspected cases of human trafficking and modern slavery to the AFP for investigation under the established Referral Protocol.

213. The Department supports unlawful non-citizen victims of human trafficking by regularising their immigration status under the Human Trafficking Visa Framework (HTVF). The HTVF includes both temporary and permanent visas:

- Temporary visas are designed to facilitate:
 - a short-term stay to enable the victim's recovery and longer-term stay to enable the victim to assist in the criminal justice process
 - entry or re-entry after short-term travel overseas, to commence, or resume, assistance in the criminal justice process.
- Permanent visas provide protection and support to victims of human trafficking who have contributed to, and cooperated closely with, an investigation into human trafficking, slavery or slavery-like practices, and who would be in danger if they returned to their home country.

214. Under the HTVF, a victim's immediate family members may also be eligible for a visa to support family reunion and foster social cohesion. In some circumstances, witnesses to trafficking offences may qualify for a permanent visa, even if they are not themselves a victim of human trafficking, slavery or slavery-like practices.

People smuggling

215. People smuggling is the organised, irregular movement of people across borders on a payment-for-service basis. It is an offence under the Migration Act and the Criminal Code Act. The AFP leads the Australian Government's investigations into people smuggling offences.

Maritime People Smuggling

216. On 18 September 2013, the Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB) was established to implement a whole-of-government effort to combat maritime people smuggling, prevent avoidable deaths at sea, and protect the integrity of Australia's borders. OSB is a military-led border security operation supported and assisted by a wide range of Australian Government agencies.

217. OSB works to detect and intercept anyone who attempts an irregular boat voyage to Australia and to return them to their country of departure or country of origin where it is safe to do so. Any person who cannot be safely returned will be transferred to a regional processing country for assessment of their protection claims.

218. Between 18 September 2013 and 31 March 2023, OSB intercepted and safely returned 1082 potential irregular immigrants (PIIs) from 46 maritime people smuggling ventures to their country of departure or their country of origin. Over the same period, close cooperation with regional partners has resulted in foreign law enforcement disruptions of an additional 103 maritime people smuggling ventures and 3535 PIIs²⁸ that are believed to have been targeting Australian territorial waters.

219. The last successful maritime people smuggling venture to Australia arrived on 27 July 2014.²⁹

220. It has been more than nine years since the last known death at sea from maritime people smuggling ventures en-route to Australia.

Migrant worker exploitation

221. The Australian Government has zero tolerance for the exploitation of workers, regardless of their visa status – this includes the underpayment of wages and entitlements.

222. The national workplace relations system has been established for all workers in Australia, regardless of a person's immigration status. It includes:

- The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Fair Work Act) and the *Fair Work Regulations 2009*, which establish a safety net of minimum entitlements and conditions of employment
- The Fair Work Commission, which is the independent agency responsible for setting minimum standards under modern awards
- The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), which is the lead agency for advice, education, compliance and enforcement activities under the Fair Work Act.

223. These laws and minimum standards apply to all employers, including third party providers (such as labour hire intermediaries).

²⁸ Statistics are provided by AFP, resulting from advice provided by foreign law enforcement. These are indicative only, as they are subject to a range of factors that may affect accuracy and quality. AFP experience is that results are typically under-reported because arrests in regional locations are occasionally not reported.

²⁹ Since the establishment of OSB, there have been 23 successful people smuggling ventures to Australia carrying 1309 Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMAs) and crew. 'Successful' people smuggling ventures are defined as those not disrupted, turned back or returned.

224. While temporary visa holders working in Australia are entitled to the same basic rights and protections as Australian citizens and permanent residents, the Australian Government recognises that migrant workers are often more vulnerable to workplace exploitation. This may be due to limited English language skills; a lack of awareness of Australian workplace laws; an acceptance of lower wages and conditions and fear of visa cancellation, detention and/or removal from Australia. The Migrant Workers' Taskforce Report³⁰ cited research that has shown that up to 50 per cent of temporary migrant workers may have been subject to underpayment³¹.
225. Recognising the serious nature of the issue, the Australian Government has taken a whole-of-government approach to addressing migrant worker exploitation. The Department works collaboratively with a range of agencies including the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Attorney General's Department, the FWO, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Federal Police.
226. The Department is committed to ensuring that Australia's visa programs are not misused in order to exploit migrant workers. It administers three legislative frameworks to achieve this goal:
- The 'Employer' scheme seeks to ensure that employers only employ visa holders with appropriate work rights, recognising that visa programs are designed for specific purposes.
 - Between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2023, the ABF conducted 243 employer awareness activities, focusing on ensuring employers know their legal obligations and that workers hold valid visas with appropriate work rights.
 - Between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2023, the ABF issued 51 Illegal Worker Warning Notices and 7 Infringement notices to employers for breaches of these obligations.
 - The 'Paying for Visa Sponsorship' scheme seeks to protect migrant workers from exploitation or extortion, encourage fair recruitment practices and protect employment opportunities for Australian workers. The Department has investigated allegations of exploitation and misuse of Labour Agreements, including cases of entrants 'paying for visa sponsorship'.
 - The 'Sponsorship Obligations' scheme seeks to ensure sponsored visa holders are not exploited by their sponsors.
 - Between 1 July 2022 and 31 March 2023, the ABF sanctioned 264 businesses for breaching their sponsorship obligations.
 - A breach may be constituted by the sponsor not ensuring equivalent terms and conditions of employment for the visa holder, not ensuring the visa holder is working in the occupation for which they were nominated, or recovering costs from the visa holder.
 - Sanctions can include the cancellation of a sponsorship approval, barring a business from further sponsorship, issuing infringement notices and civil prosecution.
227. At the Jobs and Skills Summit in September 2022, the Government committed to bring forward a package of reforms to combat migration worker exploitation, commencing 2023. This is in addition to the Government commitment to implement the recommendations of the Migrant Workers' Taskforce to tackle migrant worker exploitation.

³⁰ Attorney-General's Department (2019), *Report of the Migrant Workers' Taskforce*, Australian Government.

³¹ L Berg & B Farbenblum (2017), *Wage Theft in Australia: Findings of the National Temporary Migrant Work Survey*, UNSW Law, Sydney and University of Technology Sydney.

228. To encourage reporting, the Department and the FWO developed an Assurance Protocol. Under this Assurance Protocol, the Department's policy is not to cancel the visa of a person who has breached a work-related condition if:
- they believe they have been exploited at work, have sought advice or support from the FWO and are helping the FWO with its inquiries
 - they commit to abiding by visa conditions in the future and
 - there are no other grounds for visa cancellation (such as on national security, character, fraud or health grounds).
229. The Assurance Protocol aims to balance the ongoing integrity of the migration program with encouraging increased reporting of migrant worker exploitation. As at 31 March 2023, 79 migrant workers have been referred under the Assurance Protocol (since its commencement in February 2017) and none have had their visas cancelled.
230. The Department and ABF make information about worker rights and entitlements available to visa holders through visa grant notices and text messages. Migrant workers and potential employers are able to verify a visa holder's immigration status and the conditions attached to their visa through the Department's Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system. As at 31 March 2023, a total of 149,658 organisations had registered with VEVO.

Ensuring immigration integrity and community protection

231. Between 2015-16 and 2021-22, the refusal rate across the temporary and permanent visa programs increased from 2.5 per cent to 4.6 per cent (see Table 15).
232. Between 1 July 2015 and 31 March 2023, the Department and ABF:
- refused more than 1.69 million visa applications
 - refused the entry of 19,863 travellers at an Australian airport
 - prevented more than 4,765 people from boarding flights to Australia through the ABF's network of airline liaison officers.

Table 15 Visa applications decided by program year (non-humanitarian visas)

Decision Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 to 31 Mar 23
Granted or Refused	8,339,513	9,052,095	9,386,838	9,607,025	7,169,298	1,338,656	2,775,376	6,070,101
Refused only	209,657	237,153	308,150	377,469	325,637	50,956	127,210	469,269
Refusal Rate	2.5%	2.6%	3.3%	3.9%	4.5%	3.8%	4.6%	7.7%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Unlawful Non-Citizens

233. An Unlawful Non-Citizen (UNC) is defined in the Migration Act as a non-citizen who is in the migration zone who is not a lawful non-citizen, meaning that they do not hold a visa that is in effect.
234. The number of UNCs in Australia as at 30 June 2022 excluding lawful non-citizens as defined in the Migration Reform Act 1992, (which established the current legislative framework) and excluding persons in detention, is estimated to be 66,800. This estimate is derived by matching visa grants, arrivals and departures across many departmental systems and Fact of Death data collated by individual state and territory jurisdictions, to ascertain those that may have arrived in Australia and not departed before their visa expired or was cancelled.

235. Matching traveller data across different systems is inherently difficult and prone to error as people can arrive and leave on different travel documents and under different names. There is also a significant amount of change within the cohort of UNCs in Australia at any one time as most non-citizens are only unlawful for a short period and either engage with the Department's Status Resolution Service to resolve their immigration status or depart voluntarily.
236. The ABF's operational activity is focused towards UNCs who pose a significant risk to the Australian community (for example those involved in organised and criminal exploitation of Australia's visa program, and foreign worker exploitation).

Cancellations

237. All non-citizens who apply for, and are granted a visa, are expected to obey Australian laws and to meet, and continue to meet, character, health, identity, security and other eligibility requirements set out in the Migration Act. These requirements are intended to ensure the safety and security of the Australian community.
238. In addition to the capacity to refuse visa applications or entry to Australia, the visa cancellation framework supports the Department's core objectives of ensuring the protection of the Australian community and the integrity of Australia's borders and visa programs.
239. Section 501 of the Migration Act and associated general cancellation powers allow for the refusal or cancellation of a visa where the visa holder may present a risk to the Australian community. A person may fail the character test under section 501 of the Migration Act for a number of reasons, including if they have a substantial criminal record.

Table 16 Adverse section 501 (character) cancellations, 2020-21 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Character cancellation	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Mandatory Cancellation (s501(3A))	914	616	405
Natural Justice – (s501(2))	7	32	<5
Cancellation without Natural Justice – National Interest (s501(3)(b))	13	<5	6
Minister's personal power – without notice (s501A(3)(b))	<5	<5	<5
Minister's personal power – with notice (s501B(2))	<5	<5	0
Character refusal	798	209	111
Character revocations (not revoked) ³²	438	434	269
Total	2,175	1,298	795

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

³² This refers to where a non-citizen's request for reinstatement of a visa (revocation of the character cancellation) is not successful.

Table 17 Top five citizenships with adverse section 501 (character) outcomes, 2020-21 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Character cancellation	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
New Zealand	402	249	171	822
United Kingdom	99	71	25	195
Vietnam	60	43	25	128
China	37	17	10	64
Malaysia	15	17	19	51
Other	326	258	165	749
Total	939	655	415	2,009
Character refusal	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
United Kingdom	353	44	19	416
United States Of America	115	20	5	140
New Zealand	85	17	18	120
China	15	<15	<5	32
Ireland, Republic Of	19	<10	<5	30
Other	211	106	63	380
Total	798	209	111	1,118
Character revocations (not revoked)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
New Zealand	196	180	98	474
United Kingdom	38	36	16	90
Vietnam	29	22	8	59
Sudan	22	15	15	52
Fiii	11	11	5	27
Other	142	170	127	439
Total	438	434	269	1,141

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

240. Non-character related cancellation powers under the Migration Act are broad ranging and provide the power to consider visa cancellation in a number of circumstances to both protect the Australian community and ensure the integrity of the migration program. Cancellation grounds include non-compliance with visa conditions, provision of incorrect information, or where the person may present a risk to the health, safety or good order of the Australian community.

Table 18 General cancellation decisions, 2020-21 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)³³

General cancellation decisions	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Incorrect information (s109)	275	539	119
General power (s116)	1,198	927	1,358
Holder overseas (s128)	19,374	20,082	7,002
Business visa (s134)	83	68	106
All other powers ³⁴	4,846	2,796	1,461
Total	25,776	24,412	10,046

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

³³ A visa may be recorded as cancelled more than once. For example when a visa is cancelled, the cancellation is subsequently revoked or set aside, and then the visa is cancelled again. A cancellation may be revoked or set aside for a number of reasons, including further legal proceedings, and administrative or jurisdictional errors. Duplicates may exist. As data has been drawn from a live systems environment, the figures provided may differ slightly in previous or future reporting.

³⁴ Does not include any s501 character statistics, only s501Fs are included.

Status resolution

Entering the Status Resolution program

241. The Department's Status Resolution program assists non-citizens who require assistance to resolve their immigration status. Officers working in the Status Resolution program engage with non-citizens to promote self-agency, assisting individuals to self-resolve their immigration status in a timely and appropriate manner.

242. Individuals may enter the Status Resolution program by voluntarily approaching the Department seeking assistance to resolve their immigration status or through location and enforcement activities conducted by the ABF and/or police.

Table 19 People who entered the Status Resolution program, 2020-21 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

	2020-21	2021-22	2023-23 (as at 31 March 2023)
Persons who voluntarily approached the Department	16,168	12,453	7,774
Persons located by the Australian Border Force or police	1,825	1,611	1,327
Total	17,993	14,064	9,101

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

243. The Status Resolution population consists of non-citizens who reside:

- in the community as the holder of a Bridging E (subclass 050) visa (BVE)
- in either held immigration detention or in the community subject to a residence determination (also known as community detention).

Table 20 Status Resolution population as at 31 March 2023

Status Resolution population	Bridging E visa	Residence Determination	Held detention	Total
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA)	8,367	300	167	8,834
Non-UMA	18,226	21	950	19,197
Total	26,593	321	1,117	28,031

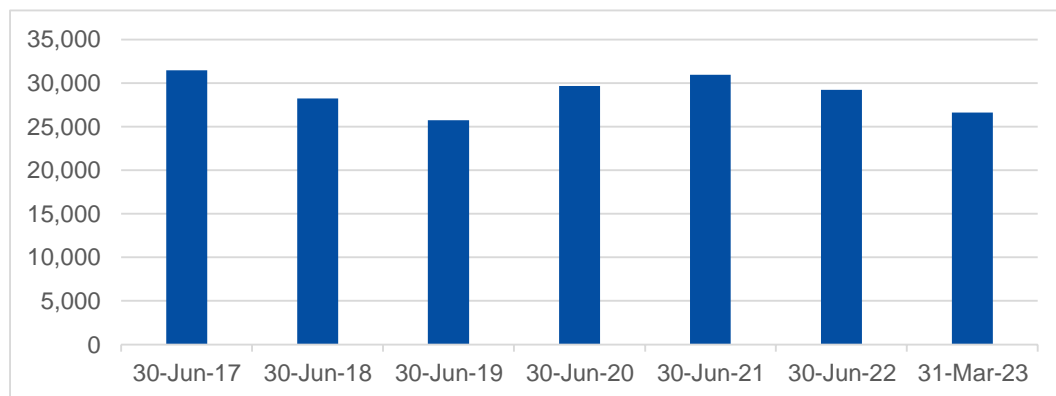
Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Bridging E (subclass 050) visas (BVE)

244. A BVE is a short-term bridging visa that allows eligible individuals to stay in Australia lawfully while they progress to a status resolution outcome. A BVE may be granted while the non-citizen:

- has a substantive visa application with the Department
- seeks merits or judicial review of a visa refusal or cancellation decision
- makes arrangements for their departure from Australia
- seeks Ministerial Intervention to substitute a decision of a review tribunal.

Figure 17 Number of Bridging E visa holders in Australia, 30 June 2016 to 31 March 2023³⁵



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2022

Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS)

245. The SRSS program provides targeted, needs based support to eligible individuals while they engage with the Department to resolve their immigration status. Types of support services provided may include financial, accommodation, access to health care, caseworker support, and access to education for school-aged children.

Table 21 Status Resolution Support Services recipients, as at 31 March 2023

	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	30 June 2022	31 March 2023
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMAs)	2,769	1,311	895	837
Non-UMAs	1,509	1,018	711	737
Total	4,278	2,329	1,606	1,574

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Leaving the Status Resolution program

246. Non-citizens exit the Status Resolution program after they have resolved their immigration status. A non-citizen's status is resolved through departure from Australia, grant of a substantive visa, or acquisition of Australian citizenship.

Table 22 Departures from Australia of Status Resolution clients, 2018-19 to 2022-23 (31 March 2023)

Departures from Australia	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (as at 31 March 2023)
Returns from community	7,444	7,363	9,809	7,128	4,599
Removals from immigration detention	5,551	3,287	1,039	1,253	1,582
Total	12,995	10,650	10,848	8,381	6,181

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Return and Reintegration Assistance Program (RRAP)

247. RRAP assists non-citizens who wish to leave Australia or a regional processing country (RPC) voluntarily, but who require assistance to do so. By facilitating voluntary departure, the RRAP program assists non-citizens to resolve their immigration status. Types of support and assistance provided include independent returns counselling, air tickets and travel assistance to final destination, assistance

³⁵ Includes Bridging E visa (subclasses 050 and 051).

to obtain travel documents, reception assistance in country of return, and for eligible UMAs a combination of cash and in-kind assistance, to support them to rebuild their lives in the return country.

Table 23 RRAP referrals and returns 2018-19 to 2022-23 (to 31 March 2023)

Returns and Reintegration Assistance	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (as at 31 March 2023)
Referrals	1,345	1,484	1,117	590	448
Returns	840	798	542	309	226

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Management of transitory persons

248. As at 31 August 2022, there were 1,145 transitory persons³⁶ in the regional processing cohort residing temporarily in Australia (Table 24).

Table 24 Transitory persons onshore, as at 31 March 2023

	Bridging E visa ^{37, 38}	Residence Determination ³⁹	Held detention	Total
All transitory persons	836	286	23	1,145

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

249. The Migration Act provides for the bringing of transitory persons (defined in section 5 of the Migration Act as a person who was taken to a regional processing country) to Australia from a regional processing country for a temporary purpose (generally medical treatment, as accompanying family or to support more effective engagement with third country migration options). Transitory persons are administratively detained on arrival in Australia under section 189 of the Migration Act as unlawful non-citizens. Transitory persons will remain in detention until they are released under residence determination or on a bridging visa through ministerial intervention, or otherwise depart Australia.

250. Transitory persons do not have a settlement pathway in Australia and are encouraged to engage in available third country migration options, including resettlement in the United States or New Zealand or voluntary return home or to another country to which they have right of entry. Transitory persons can continue to pursue third country migration options while they remain in Australia for a temporary purpose and have a range of support to assist them connect with their available migration options, become settlement ready and depart.

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³⁶ Being unauthorised maritime arrivals on or after 19 July 2013 who were taken to a regional processing country for protection claims assessment and not invited to lodge a temporary protection or safe haven enterprise visa in Australia.

³⁷ Includes 10 people residing in the community with a ceased BVE.

³⁸ Includes <5 babes born to transitory persons holding a Bridging E (subclass 050) visa (BVE) who are pending a BVE grant.

³⁹ Includes <5 babies born to transitory persons but not yet subject to residence determination.