



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Addendum to the 11th edition of the Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs



11th Edition - Addendum
October 2023

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Acronyms

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ABF	Australian Border Force
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AC	Companion of the Order
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMP	Australian Police Medal
AO	Order of Australia
BVE	Bridging Visa E
CSP	Community Support Program
DAMA	Designated Area Migration Agreement
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESOS Act	Education Services for Overseas Students Act
FPP	Fit and Proper Person
FWO	Fair Work Ombudsman
HTVF	Human Trafficking Visa Framework
OMARA	Office for Migration Agents Registration Authority
OSB	Operation Sovereign Borders
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
PII	Potential Irregular Migrant
PSM	Public Service Medal
RMA	Registered Migration Agent
RoS	Resolution of Status
RPC	Regional Processing Country
RRAP	Return and Reintegration Assistance Program
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SCV	Special Category Visa
SRSS	Status Resolution Support Services
TSMIT	Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold
UMA	Unauthorised Maritime Arrival
UNC	Unlawful Non-Citizen
UPIA	Unlawful Provider of Immigration Assistance
VEVO	Visa Entitlement Verification Online

Purpose

1. This paper is an addendum to the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper (the Administration Paper), and should be read in conjunction with the eleventh edition.
2. The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) produces the addendum as an update to the current edition of the Administration Paper, to provide updated figures and information on the management of Australia's immigration program. The addendum complements existing publicly available resources and provides a tri-annual overview of the Immigration Program and its related border and compliance programs.

Introduction

3. The 11th of August 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of our nation's journey into multiculturalism, five decades since the Australian Government published *A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future* on 11 August 1973. This report envisioned a nation thriving on 'dynamic interactions between diverse ethnic components' by the 'year 2000', and developed a policy of inclusive multiculturalism, which continues to be at the heart of Australia's nation building.
4. Our migration system continues to emphasise Australia's transition to a more skilled, innovative and diverse economy, to enhance security and sovereign capabilities, and to drive higher productivity and living standards. As we confront considerable change and challenges, migration reform aims to respond to these challenges and leverage opportunities both now and into the future.
5. A well targeted migration program can play an important role in positioning Australia for future economic growth, while mitigating known risk. Targeted reforms can help Australia to attract skilled migrants to complement the existing Australian workforce and support Australia's long-term economic prosperity as outlined in the *Intergenerational Report 2023*.

Review of the Migration System

6. On 27 April 2023, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Clare O'Neil MP, released *A Migration System for a More Prosperous and Secure Australia - Outline of the Government's Migration Strategy* (381KB PDF) (the Outline).
7. The Outline is informed by the comprehensive *Migration Review* undertaken by a panel of three eminent persons, led by Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM, and significant stakeholder consultation. The Outline sets out a series of directions for significant reform, including the need for a better designed, simpler and faster migration system that helps ensure Australia has the skills needed to enhance Australia's economic prosperity and security in a competitive global market.

Addressing the integrity of the Migration System

8. Ahead of the release of the Government's Migration Strategy later in 2023, a range of complementary measures have been announced to address weaknesses in the integrity underpinnings of the migration system. These include:
 - the Government's response to the *Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System (the Nixon Review)*
 - reforms to address the backlog of unmeritorious Protection Visa applications
 - measures to enhance the integrity and quality of the international education system
 - reforms to enhance the protection of vulnerable temporary migrant workers.
9. The Government's response to the Nixon Review, released on 4 October 2023 commits to addressing gaps and weaknesses identified in Australia's migration system. It intends to restore the integrity of

the visa system and implement measures to prevent, deter and sanction individuals who seek to exploit vulnerable migrants.

10. A re-established immigration compliance function within the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) will identify and action issues across the migration spectrum from facilitators, visa applicants and visa holders to unlawful non-citizens and employers who seek to exploit them. Immigration experience and expertise across the organisation will be brought together to address the exploitation and misuse of the system.
11. The Nixon Review highlighted that protracted Protection visa processing and review timeframes are motivating abuse of Australia's Protection visa program. Measures announced on 5 October 2023 directly address that abuse by significantly reducing processing timeframes and consequently removing incentives for non-genuine applicants to apply for protection.
12. On 26 August 2023, Minister O'Neil announced a package of measures to support integrity in the international education system and to support genuine international students. The measures in the package include:
 - closing the concurrent enrolments loophole, which allows international students who have been in Australia for less than six months to change from genuine study to an arrangement which facilitates access to work
 - increasing the amount of funds international students need in order to obtain a Student visa
 - use of existing powers under Section 97 of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS Act) to issue suspension certificates to high-risk education providers.
13. The Department has made significant progress addressing visa backlogs and the Government has outlined a strategy to re-design our migration system. None of this work will be successful unless gaps and weaknesses are addressed in the foundations of the system.

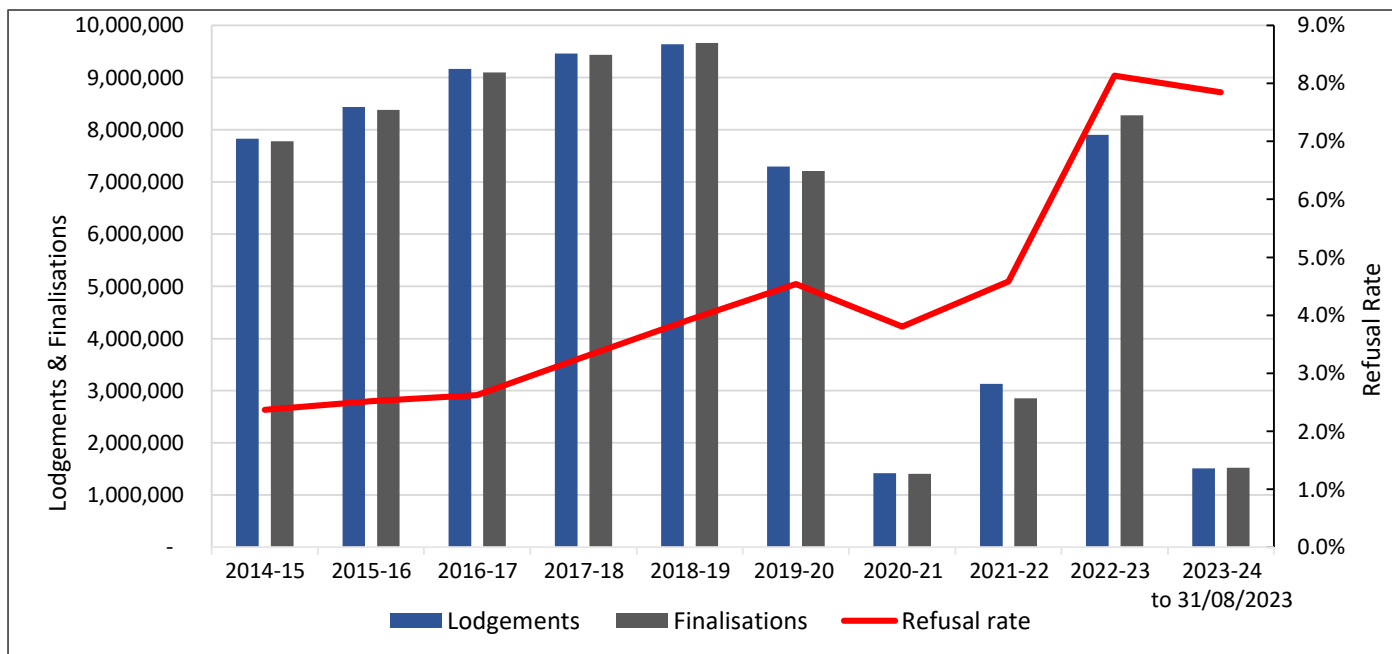
Skilled Migration to boost Australia's economic prosperity

14. The Migration Strategy will aim to address issues with the existing migration system and to complement other Whole of Government strategies outlined in the Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities, Working Future, which describes reforming the Migration System to better target skilled migration as one of 10 key areas in the Government's Roadmap to drive Australia's long-term prosperity.
15. Reform will include building a new temporary skilled migration system, to ensure Australia has the necessary skills to boost the nation's economic prosperity and security.
16. Consultation following the release of the *Review of the Migration System: Final Report 2023* highlighted that improvements to migration outcomes requires cooperation and action at all levels of government. States and territories also hold many of the key policy levers that support positive migration outcomes.
17. The Government is committed to giving states and territories a greater role in migration planning. On 16 August 2023, National Cabinet agreed to the development of a principles-based, multi-year planning model for migration, to improve collaboration with states and territories. The Commonwealth will work with states and territories to jointly develop models for consideration that better support alignment with infrastructure, workforce and population planning across all tiers of government. These reforms will form a part of the Government's Migration Strategy.

Administering the immigration program

Broad visa trends

Figure 1 Total non-humanitarian visa programs trends, 2014-15 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

18. Following the staged reopening of Australia's international borders from 15 December 2021, non-humanitarian visa applications continue to recover. While overall application volumes remain below pre-pandemic levels, a number of key programs including working holiday makers, students and temporary skilled visas are now at or above these levels.
19. The increase in refusal rates in 2022-23 and in 2023-24 to 31 August 2023 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.
20. For more information on broad visa trends see paragraphs 27-29 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Immigration outreach and engagement

21. The Department's immigration-focused outreach and engagement capability supports effective communication and stakeholder engagement. Outreach officers have undertaken over 3,500 engagements since July 2022, supported by the development of more than 150 communication products, including factsheets, social media, website content and videos.
22. Communication activities in 2022-23 supported the promotion of Australia as a destination of choice for skilled migrants and the submission of complete visa applications, which has contributed to the reduction in on-hand visa applications.

23. The Department delivered on a 12-month international digital marketing campaign in 26 countries to attract overseas skilled workers to fill critical skills shortages, as announced in the October 2022 Budget.
24. 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.
25. As at 31 August 2023, the website had attracted nearly 16,000,000 visitors. Over 260,000 users had commenced the SkillSelect expression of interest form for a skilled visa for Australia as result of digital advertising.
26. For more information on immigration outreach and engagement see paragraphs 37-40 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

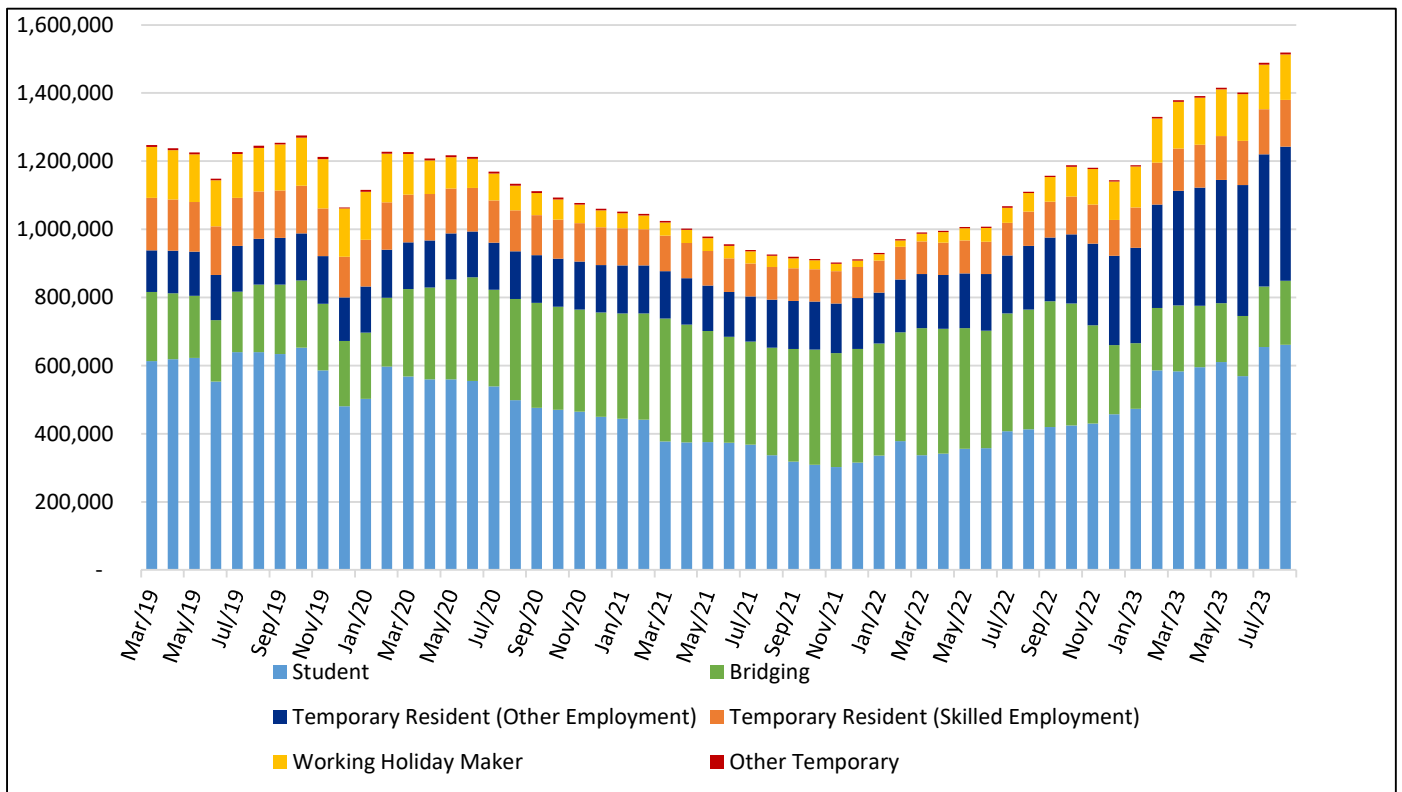
Temporary visas

Table 1 Change in the number of temporary visa holders in Australia between 31 August 2022 and 31 August 2023

Visa Category	31/08/2022	31/08/2023	Difference	% Change
Bridging (excluding Bridging visa E)	351,385	188,132	-163,253	-46.5%
Crew and Transit	13,071	13,505	434	3.3%
Other Temporary	4,095	5,582	1,487	36.3%
Special Category	675,027	704,186	29,159	4.3%
Student	413,267	660,765	247,498	59.9%
Temporary Protection	22,986	16,815	- 6,171	-26.8%
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	186,296	394,072	207,776	111.5%
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	101,214	137,075	35,861	35.4%
Visitor	236,109	298,888	62,779	26.6%
Working Holiday Maker	54,025	133,503	79,478	147.1%
Total	2,057,475	2,552,523	495,048	24.1%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Figure 2 Number of temporary visa holders in Australia, March 2019 to 31 August 2023

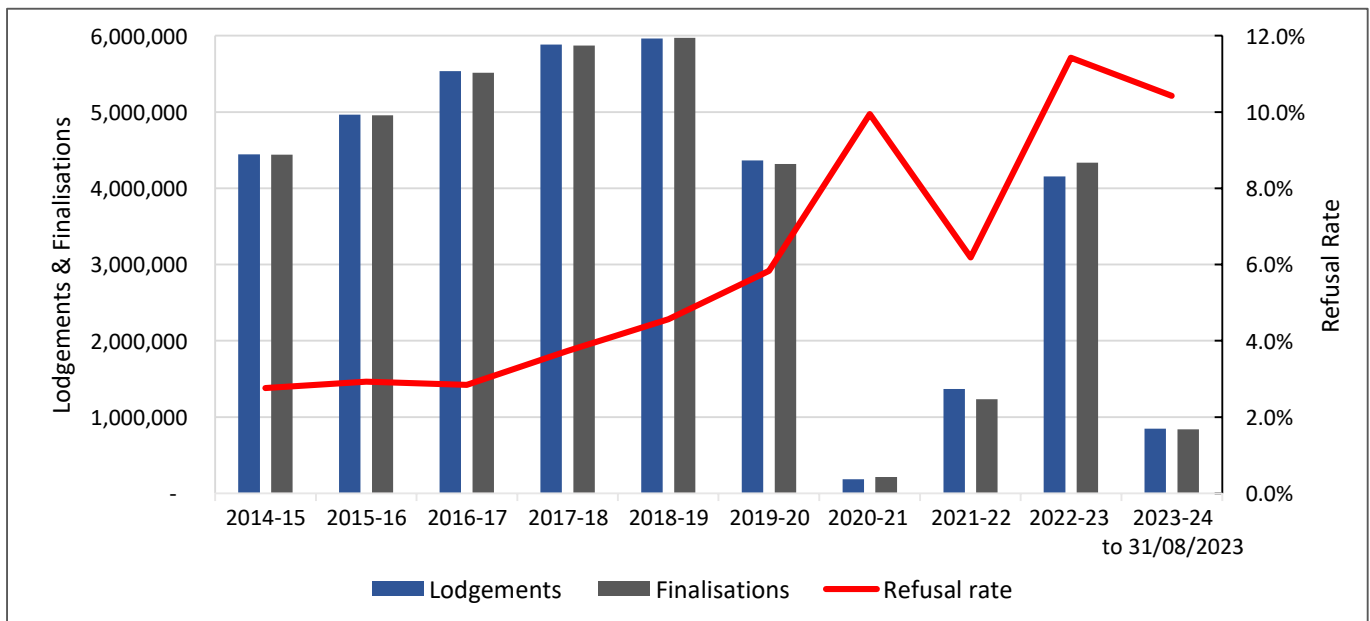


Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2023**

27. Temporary visa holders in Australia have recovered strongly since the re-opening of the border. This has been driven primarily by the return of international students and working holiday makers and historically low departures. The increase in international students has been due to growth in application volumes and multiple cohorts, including first, second, and third year students, arriving at the same time for the start of the 2023 academic year.

Visitor visa

Figure 3 Visitor visa program trends, 2014-15 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



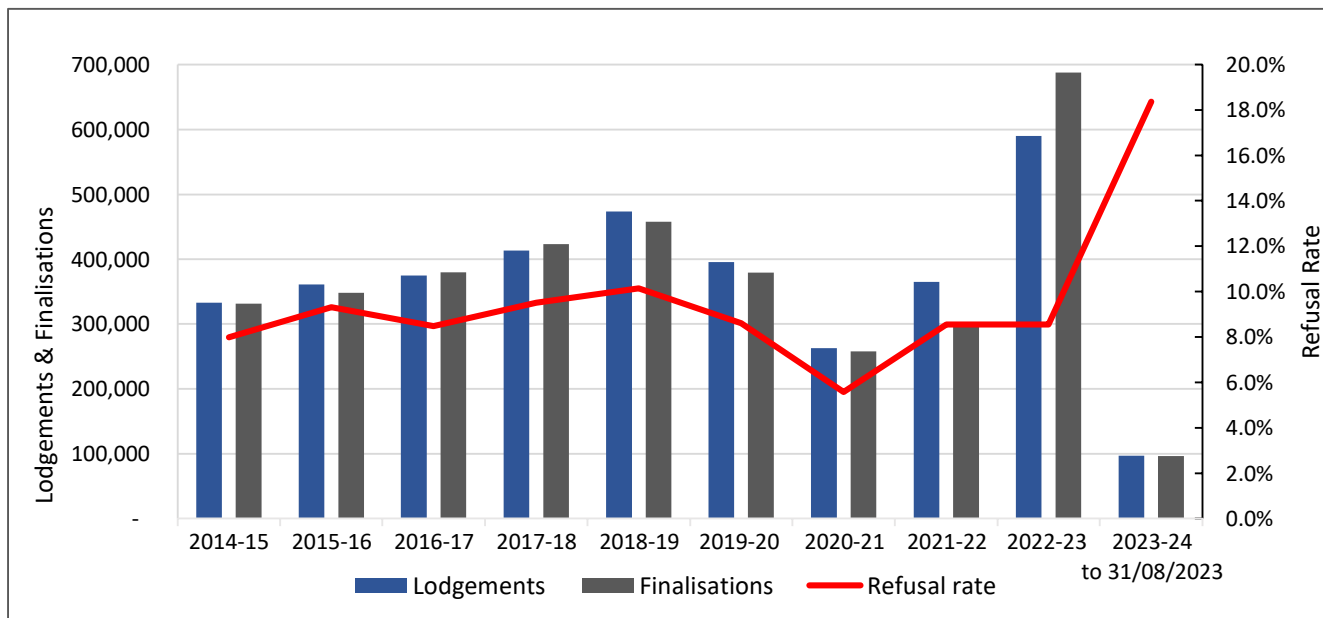
Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2023**

28. Visitor visa application and finalisations continue to recover supporting the tourism industry and re-building international business links.

29. Visitor visa applications in 2023-24 to 31 August 2023 have increased by 46 per cent compared with the same period in 2022-23. Applications are being processed, on average, in less than a day.
30. For more information on Visitor visas see paragraphs 55-57 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Student visa

Figure 4 Student visa program trends, 2014-15 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)¹



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

31. Strong growth has continued in Student visa lodgements as well as an increase in the number of Student visa holders in Australia (see Tables 2 and 3).
32. The volume of non-genuine and fraudulent activity has also increased, resulting in a decrease in the grant rate (see Table 4).
33. For more information on Student visas see paragraphs 58-66 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

¹ Includes all primary and secondary Student visa applications

Table 2 Change in the number of Student visa applications lodged by sector between 2021-22 and 2022-23, and year to date 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Sector	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	% Change	2023-24 to 31/08/2023
Foreign Affairs or Defence	3,552	4,465	913	25.7%	657
Higher Education	194,176	312,766	118,590	61.1%	55,158
Independent ELICOS	32,444	70,970	38,526	118.7%	10,560
Non-Award	8,368	17,123	8,755	104.6%	809
Postgraduate Research	12,444	14,433	1,989	16.0%	2,542
Schools	5,466	11,087	5,621	102.8%	1,486
Vocational Education and Training	108,554	159,460	50,906	46.9%	25,714
Total	365,004	590,304	225,300	61.7%	96,926

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 3 Number of Student visa holders in Australia, quarterly from June 2022 to 31 August 2023

Sector	30-Jun-22	30-Sep-22	31-Dec-22	31-Mar-23	30-Jun-23	31-Aug-23
Foreign Affairs or Defence	2,123	2,442	1,979	3,375	3,348	3,540
Higher Education	196,048	236,674	234,380	331,431	310,389	385,731
Independent ELICOS	12,065	24,922	35,370	41,629	40,069	39,829
Non-Award	993	7,792	3,263	9,075	4,174	8,674
Postgraduate Research	22,460	23,138	22,816	26,397	26,738	27,940
Schools	8,006	10,689	7,104	11,291	10,130	14,978
Vocational Education and Training	116,213	113,657	152,047	159,549	173,894	180,062
Total	357,908	419,314	456,959	582,747	568,742	660,754

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 4 Offshore student visa grant rate by sector from 2019 to 2020 and year to date 2023-24 (31 August 2023)

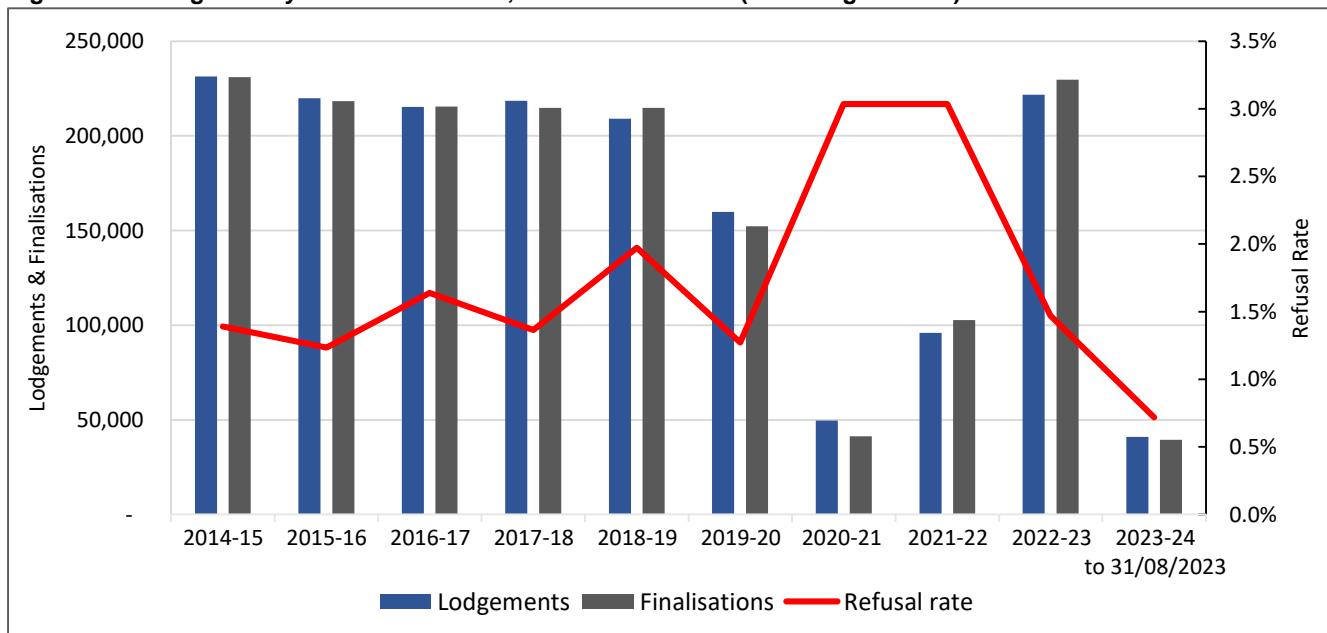
Sector	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 to 31 Aug 2023
Foreign Affairs or Defence Sector	99.5%	96.3%	99.0%	99.2%	99.8%
Higher Education Sector	86.6%	89.6%	94.4%	83.8%	79.0%
Independent ELICOS ² Sector	91.7%	81.3%	85.0%	90.4%	86.5%
Non-Award Sector	99.6%	78.7%	99.4%	99.4%	98.5%
Postgraduate Research Sector	97.1%	96.7%	96.7%	96.3%	94.7%
Schools Sector	91.4%	96.2%	96.6%	93.5%	94.3%
Vocational Education and Training Sector	63.9%	54.9%	68.9%	53.4%	63.2%
Grand Total	87.6%	85.5%	89.5%	80.4%	78.6%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

² ELICOS - English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

Working Holiday Makers

Figure 5 Working Holiday Maker visa trends, 2014-15 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

34. Working holiday maker applications received and finalised surpassed pre-pandemic levels in 2022-23 and the application rate remains strong in 2023-24 to 31 August 2023. This recovery has supported cultural exchange and boosted people to people connections between young adults from Australia and 47 countries.
35. For more information on Working Holiday Makers see paragraphs 67-74 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Temporary Skilled Work

Table 5 Temporary Skills Shortage visa applications: most frequently nominated occupations for FY2021-22 and FY2022-23 (primary applications)

	Nominated Occupation	2021-22	2022-23	% change from 2021-22	2022-23 as % of total
1	261313 Software Engineer	2,969	2,967	0%	5.7%
2	351311 Chef	1,988	2,409	21%	4.7%
3	261111 ICT Business Analyst	1,117	1,928	73%	3.7%
4	253112 Resident Medical Officer	1,500	1,889	26%	3.7%
5	261312 Developer Programmer	1,245	1,378	11%	2.7%
6	321211 Motor Mechanic (General)	444	1,335	201%	2.6%
7	224711 Management Consultant	529	994	88%	1.9%
8	221213 External Auditor	732	963	32%	1.9%
9	Specified in Labour Agreement	354	953	169%	1.8%
10	221111 Accountant (General)	940	888	-6%	1.7%
11	141111 Café or Restaurant Manager	401	848	111%	1.6%
12	351411 Cook	396	841	112%	1.6%
13	225113 Marketing Specialist	483	758	57%	1.5%
14	321212 Diesel Motor Mechanic	292	750	157%	1.5%
15	111211 Corporate General Manager	361	694	92%	1.3%
16	Other occupation	18,311	32,010	75%	62.0%
	Total	32,062	51,605	61%	100.0%

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 6 Number of Temporary Resident (skilled) primary visa applications lodged between 2021-22 and 2022-23, and year to date 2022-23 (31 August 2023)

Visa category	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	% Change	2022-23 (to 31 Aug 2023)
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	35,850	47,116	11,266	31%	7,399

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

36. Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa applications received have increased by 31 per cent in 2022-23 compared with 2021-22 (see Table 6). Improvements in processing times have enabled more workers enter Australia to contribute to addressing skills shortages across the economy. The average processing time in August 2023 was 19 days.
37. For more information on Temporary Skilled Work see paragraphs 75-83 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement

38. On 5 May 2023, the Government announced the establishment of the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement to help streamline the recruitment of overseas workers in the aged care sector in key direct care occupations, where appropriately qualified Australian workers cannot be found and standard work visa programs are not available.
39. The Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement has been carefully designed to create positive incentives for aged care providers to improve workforce conditions and provide additional support to overseas workers. The first visa applications under the Agreement have been received and processed by the Department.
40. As at 31 August 2023, there were eight Aged Care Industry Labour Agreements in effect, which provide for more than 6,000 direct care workers over five years.
41. A list of all current labour agreements including holders of an Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement is available on the Department's website at:
<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/employing-and-sponsoring-someone/sponsoring-workers/nominating-a-position/labour-agreements/list-of-current-labour-agreements>.
42. For more information on Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement see paragraphs 84-86 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

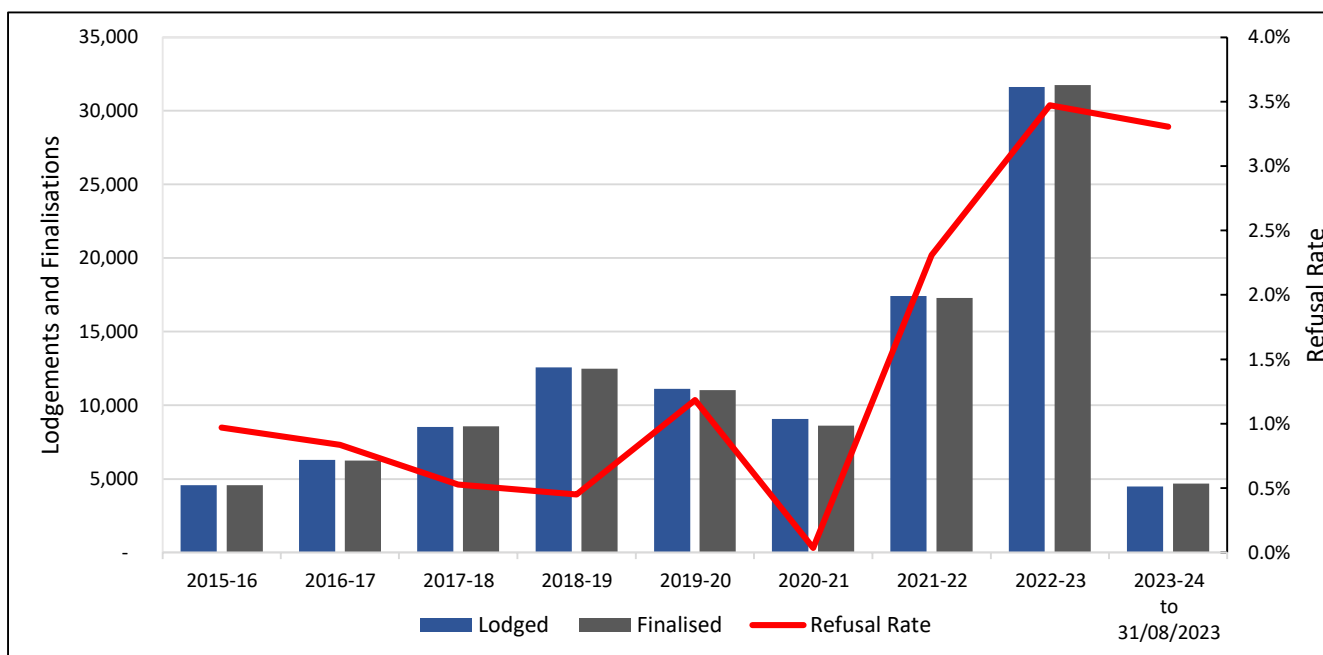
43. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme continues to be highly valued by employers and workers, and to see strong overall growth.
44. In the 2022-23 program year, 30,424 Subclass 403 PALM stream visas were granted. This is an increase of over 82 per cent compared to the same period in 2021-22.
45. As at 31 August 2023, there were 37,583 PALM workers in Australia, with over 67 per cent of PALM workers employed directly in agriculture, and 27 per cent employed in the meat processing sector.
46. For more information on the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme see paragraphs 87-93 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 7 Number of PALM scheme visa grants, FY2021-22 to FY 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Citizenship Country	FY 2021 - 2022	FY 2022 - 2023	Difference	% Change	FY 2023 - 2024 (up to Aug 2023)
Fiji	2152	3,984	1,832	85%	493
Kiribati	296	1037	741	250%	179
Nauru	<5	<5	<5	<500%	<5
Papua New Guinea	647	1220	573	88%	236
Samoa	3,378	2,586	-792	-23%	367
Solomon Islands	2,619	2,766	147	6%	387
Timor - Leste	1,211	4,746	3,535	291%	838
Tonga	2032	4,532	2,500	123%	306
Tuvalu	<10	<80	69	862%	<45
Vanuatu	4371	9,471	5,100	116%	1658
Total	16,714	30,424	13,710	82%	4504

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

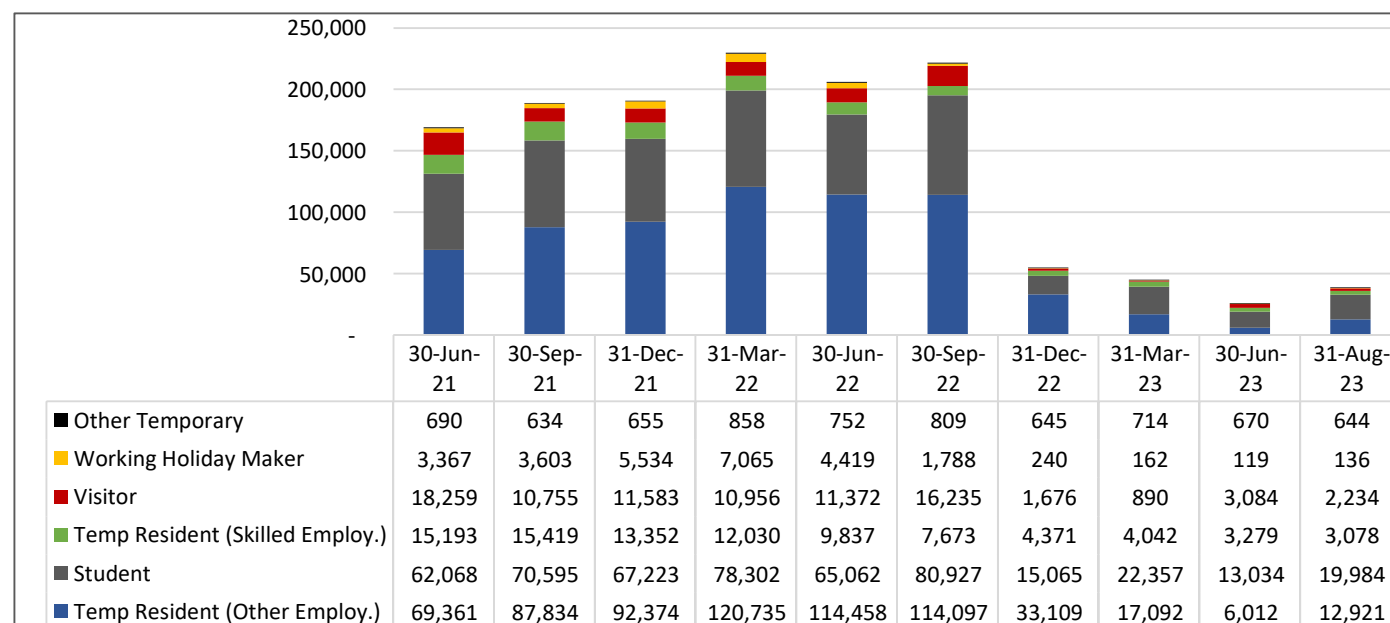
Figure 6 Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme including Seasonal Worker Program and Pacific Labour Scheme from 2015-16 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Bridging visas

Figure 7 Bridging Visa A, B and C holders in Australia by temporary visa category applied for 30 June 2021 to 31 August 2023³



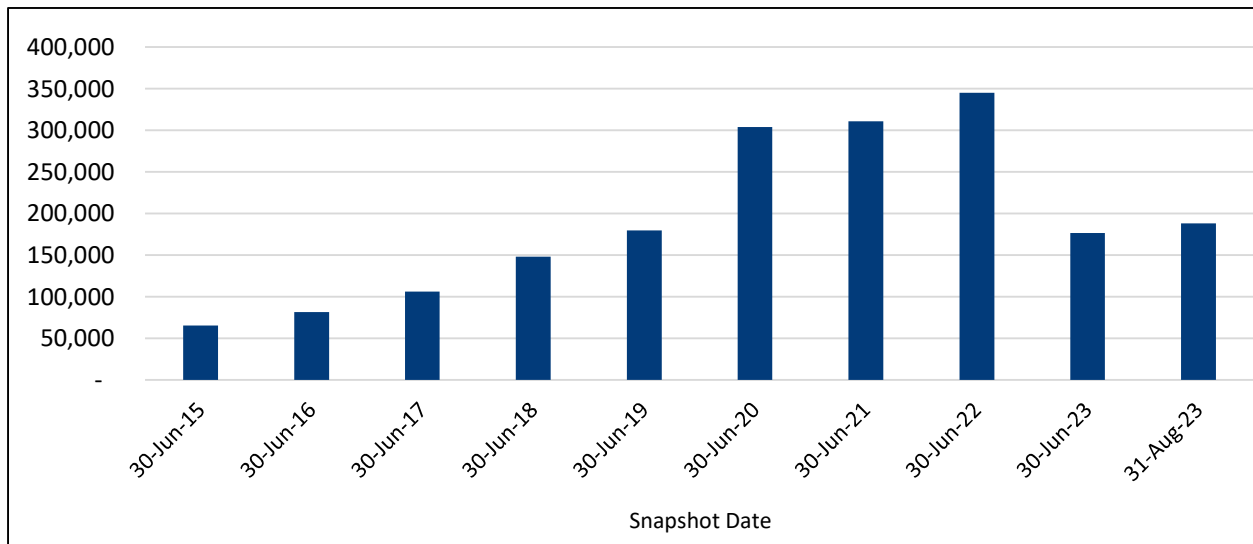
Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

47. The number of Bridging visa holders (excluding Bridging E visas (subclasses 050 and 051)) decreased by 45.4 per cent between 30 June 2022 (344,832) and 31 August 2023 due to increased numbers of onshore visa applications finalised.

³ Excludes Bridging Visa E (subclass 050 and 051) holders.

48. On 31 August 2023, there were 188,132 Bridging visa holders in Australia. The number of Bridging visa holders has returned to pre-COVID levels (191,655 Bridging visa holders as at 31 December 2019). For more information on Bridging E visas, refer to the 'Status resolution' section.
49. For more information on Bridging visas see paragraphs 94-98 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Figure 8 Number of bridging visa holders in Australia, 30 June 2015 to 31 August 2023 ⁴



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Applications for merits review

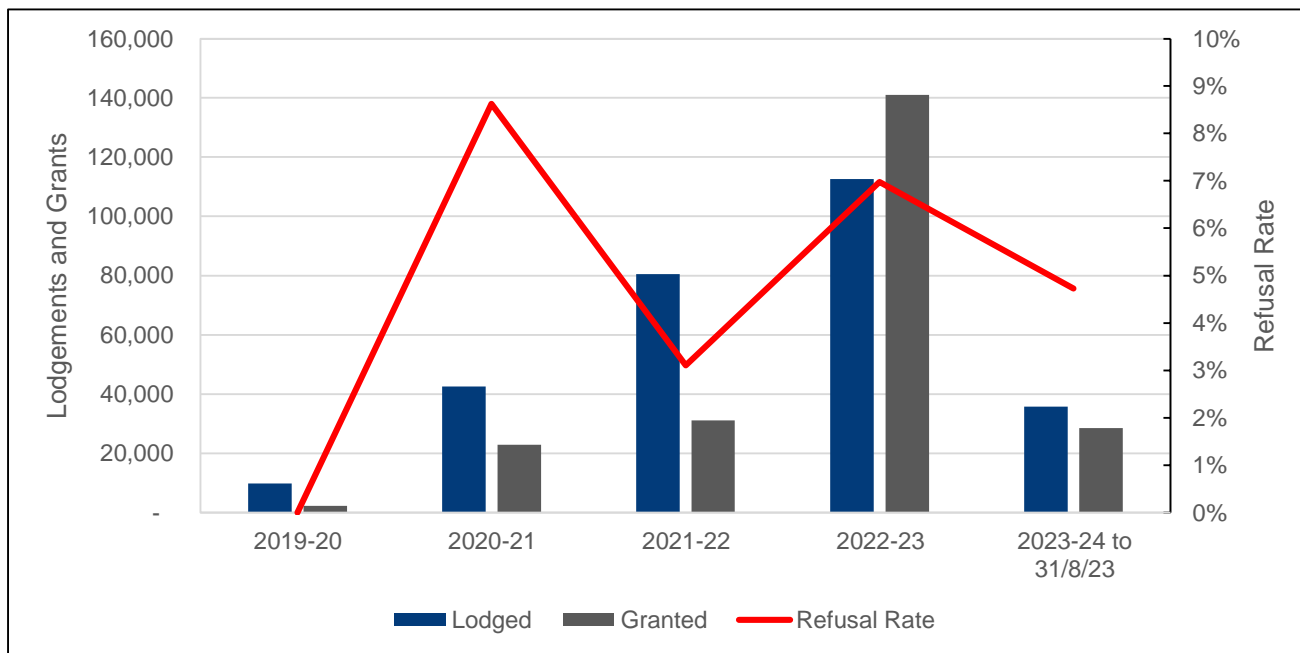
50. The number of active matters in the Migration and Refugee Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) caseload remains high, particularly for applications undergoing review of Protection visa related decisions. As at 31 August 2023, 52,212 Bridging visa holders were awaiting a review of a migration and refugee visa-related decision. This is a small increase from the 51,118 seeking review as at 30 June 2023.
51. For more information see paragraphs 99-100 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

COVID-19 Pandemic Event Visa

52. The COVID-19 Pandemic Event Visa was introduced in April 2020 to enable temporary migrants to lawfully remain in Australia while the border was closed. It also addressed labour shortages in critical sectors in the local economy.
53. Between its introduction in 2020 and 31 August 2023, 281,195 applications were received and 225,731 visas were granted.
54. From 1 February 2024, the Pandemic Event Visa will be closed. Closure of the Pandemic Event visa will contribute to a well-managed migration system that better regulates visa pathways and normalises the flow of temporary migrants in and out of Australia.
55. For more information on the COVID-19 Pandemic Event Visa see paragraphs 53-54 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

⁴ Excludes Bridging Visa E (subclass 050 and 051) holders, includes applicants for permanent and temporary visas.

Figure 9 COVID-19 pandemic event visa trends 2019-20 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Safeguards and protections for temporary migrant workers

56. On 22 June 2023, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Andrew Giles MP introduced the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill 2023 (the Bill) to Parliament. The Bill proposes measures that implement recommendations 19 and 20 of the Report of the Migrant Workers' Taskforce. The Bill also includes other measures to strengthen the compliance of businesses employing temporary migrant workers and measures to encourage reporting. It includes:

- new criminal offences and associated civil penalty provisions to deter employers and others in the employment chain from using a person's migration status to exploit them in the workplace
- a measure to prohibit employers engaged in serious, deliberate or repeated non-compliance from being able to employ additional migrant workers for a period of time (supported by appropriate natural justice provisions)
- increased monetary penalties for employer breaches under the Migration Act, to send a strong message about the harm caused by exploitation to the individual, workers in the labour market and to compliant businesses
- new compliance tools to facilitate employer compliance with obligations without penalty, and to support more timely compliance outcomes where appropriate
- measures to enhance the safeguards and protections available to temporary migrant workers to encourage reporting.

57. In June 2023, the Department commenced a targeted co-design consultation process with industry, union, government and civil society stakeholders to inform the design of pilot initiatives that further enhance safeguards and protections. The purpose is to encourage migrant workers to report exploitation and seek workplace justice. The co-design process is focused on the following initiatives:

- identifying information and education gaps and challenges to improve understanding of rights and responsibilities, and protections available. This includes exploring an expanded role for community legal centres, education institutions and industry bodies in those education initiatives and in reporting non-compliance
- complementary reforms to encourage reporting and facilitate workplace justice, including:

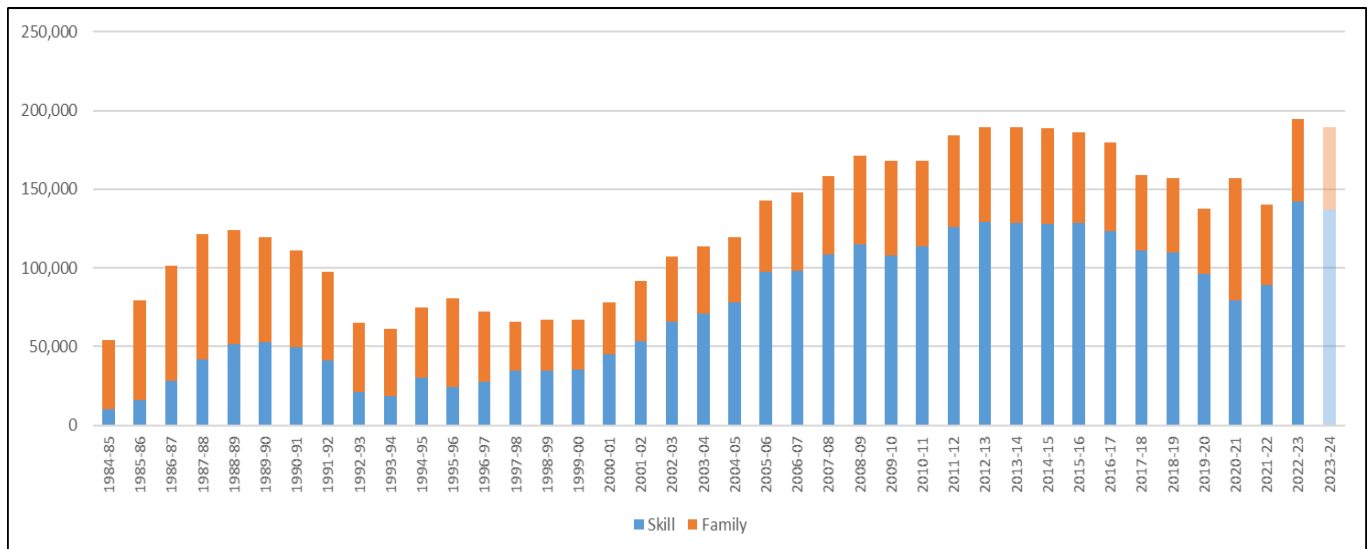
- o visa options to enable temporary migrant workers to remain in Australia, where necessary, to pursue workplace justice
- o enhanced protections from visa cancellation where there is evidence of exploitation.

58. The Government is also progressing reforms to the employer sponsor visa framework to ensure exploited migrant workers do not feel compelled to remain in exploitative working arrangements. These reforms aim to address the power imbalance between sponsored workers and their employers, giving temporary migrant workers greater confidence to report employer breaches and seek compensation for workplace entitlements.

Migration Program

59. The 2022-23 permanent Migration Program was fully delivered, with 195,004 outcomes delivered against a planning level of 195,000 places. All Skilled and Family stream category planning levels were substantially met.
60. The Government decides the number of places for these programs, setting planning levels as part of the annual Budget process (see Table 8 for planning levels). The exceptions are Partner and Child visas which are demand driven and planning levels are indicative only.
61. The planning level for the 2023-24 permanent Migration Program has been set at 190,000 places.
62. For more information on the Migration Program see paragraphs 103-107 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Figure 10 Migration Program outcomes by stream, 1984-85 to 2022-23 with 2023-24 Planning Levels



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

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

Category	2020-21 Planning Levels	2020-21 Program Outcome	2021-22 Planning Levels	2021-22 Program Outcomes	2022-23 Planning Levels	2022-23 Program Outcomes	2023-2024 Planning Levels
Employer Sponsored	22,000	23,503	24,000	26,103	35,000	35,000	36,825
Skilled Independent	6,500	7,213	6,500	5,864	32,100	32,100	30,375
Skilled Regional	11,200	13,585	17,700	18,223	34,000	33,944	32,300
State/Territory Nominated	11,200	14,268	17,700	19,376	31,000	31,000	30,400
Business Innovation and Investment Program	13,500	11,198	13,500	10,496	5,000	5,000	1,900
Global Talent ⁵	15,000	9,584	10,000	8,776	5,000	5,000	5,000
Distinguished Talent	200	269	200	225	300	300	300
Skill total	79,600	79,620	89,600	89,063	142,400	142,344	137,100
Partner ⁶	72,300	72,376	62,300	46,288	40,500	40,500	40,500
Parent	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	8,500	8,500	8,500
Other Family	500	496	500	500	500	500	500
Child ⁷	3000	3,006	3,000	3,006	3,000	3,000	3,000
Family total	80,300	80,378	70,300	54,294	52,500	52,500	52,500
Special Eligibility	100	54	100	199	100	160	400
Total Migration Program	160,000	160,052	160,000	143,556	195,000	195,004	190,000

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 9 Migration Program - Top 10⁸ countries of citizenship, 2017-18 to 2022-23

Citizenship Country ⁹	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
India	33,310	33,611	25,698	21,791	24,324	41,145
China, Peoples Republic of (excl SARs ¹⁰)	25,145	24,282	18,587	22,207	18,240	23,936
Philippines	10,610	9,159	8,965	11,058	8,591	13,085
Nepal	3,067	4,096	5,048	4,714	6,628	12,041
United Kingdom	13,654	13,689	10,681	12,703	9,584	11,439
New Zealand	5,295	6,209	4,997	3,978	4,421	10,853
Vietnam	5,124	5,532	5,398	8,120	6,492	6,571
South Africa	4,235	3,861	3,743	3,523	3,305	5,434
Pakistan	6,235	4,739	4,136	4,121	3,734	4,927
Sri Lanka	2,706	2,716	2,609	2,237	2,801	4,482
Other	53,036	52,429	50,504	65,600	55,436	69,967
Total	162,417	160,323	140,366	160,052	143,556	195,004

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

63. The top countries of citizenship under the Migration Program were largely similar from 2021-22 to 2022-23. The UK was the third highest ranked source country for the program in 2021-22, but was the fifth highest ranked source country in 2022-23.

⁵ Commenced in the 2019-20 program year.

⁶ For 2023-24, delivery of the Partner visa category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only.

⁷ For 2023-24, delivery of the Child visa category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only.

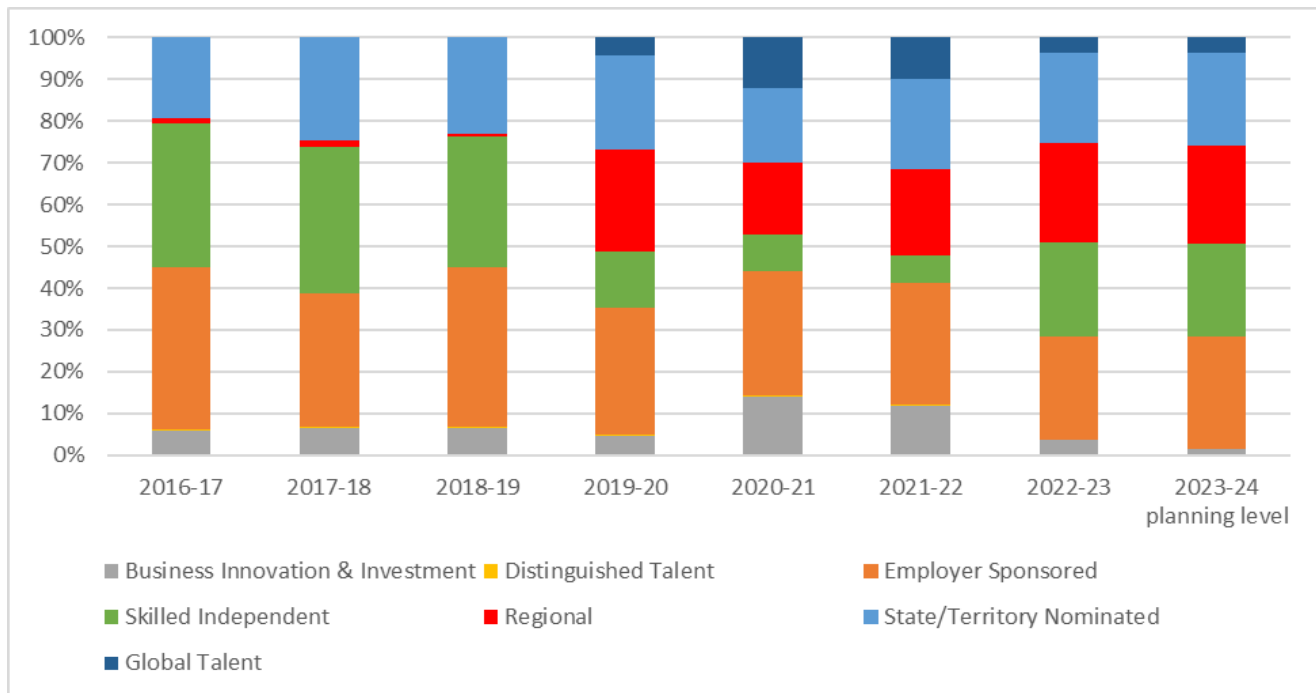
⁸ Top 10 grouping based on 2022-23 outcome.

⁹ New Zealand grants were not counted toward the Migration Program outcome prior to 2017-18.

¹⁰ SAR - Special Administrative Region

Skilled Migration Program

Figure 11 Skilled Migration Program Composition of the Skilled Migration Program outcomes, 2016-17 to 2023-24 and planning levels (2022-23 and 2023-24)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

64. In 2022-23, 142,344 skill stream places were delivered, which accounted for 73 per cent of the total 2022-23 Migration Program outcome.
65. For more information on the Skilled Migration Program see paragraphs 108-120 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Regional Migration

66. Migration to regional Australia assists in meeting local workforce and demographic needs. Temporary, provisional and permanent regional skilled visa options are available. In 2023-24, 32,300 places have been allocated for Regional visas.
67. There was strong demand for Regional skilled visas in 2022-23, with the overall number of lodgements increasing from 42,502 in 2021-22 to 55,657 in 2022-23 (see Table 10). This resulted from an increase in nomination allocations for state and territory governments, reflecting the increase to migration program planning levels for this type of visa.
68. The increase to planning levels also contributed to an increase in finalisation activity, with the Department finalising 60,246 Regional skilled applications in 2022-23 compared to 21,875 finalisations in 2021-22 (see Table 11). This growth in finalisations was also due, in part, to efforts to reduce the on-hand caseload for Skilled Regional visas (subclass 887).
69. For more information see paragraphs 121-123 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 10 Number of applications lodged for Regional visas, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Visa subclass	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (to 31/08/2023)
Regional Sponsored Migration scheme visa (subclass 187)	1,634	514	21
Skilled - Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 489)	372	333	38
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)	26,314	47,814	3,865
Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 494)	3,165	3,752	448
Skilled - Regional visa (subclass 887)	10,886	2,076	286
Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) (subclass 191)	131	1,168	1,789
Total	42,502	55,657	6,447

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 11 Number of applications finalised for Regional visas, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Visa subclass	Outcome	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (to 31/08/2023)
Regional Sponsored Migration scheme visa (subclass 187)	Granted	1,797	3,275	240
	Refused and withdrawn	240	391	43
<i>Sub total subclass 187</i>		2,037	3,666	283
Skilled - Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 489)	Granted	1,156	3,487	637
	Refused and withdrawn	112	423	94
<i>Sub total subclass 489</i>		1,268	3,910	731
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491)	Granted	13,898	23,129	7,730
	Refused and withdrawn	912	5,061	264
<i>Sub total subclass 491</i>		14,810	28,190	7,994
Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 494)	Granted	1,348	3,793	865
	Refused and withdrawn	177	578	113
<i>Sub total subclass 494</i>		1,525	4,371	978
Skilled - Regional visa (subclass 887)	Granted	2,070	19,655	1,255
	Refused and withdrawn	118	219	15
<i>Sub total subclass 887</i>		2,188	19,874	1,270
Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) (subclass 191)	Granted	<50	<235	644
	Refused and withdrawn	<5	<5	5
<i>Sub total subclass 191</i>		47	235	649
Grand Total		21,875	60,246	11,905

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

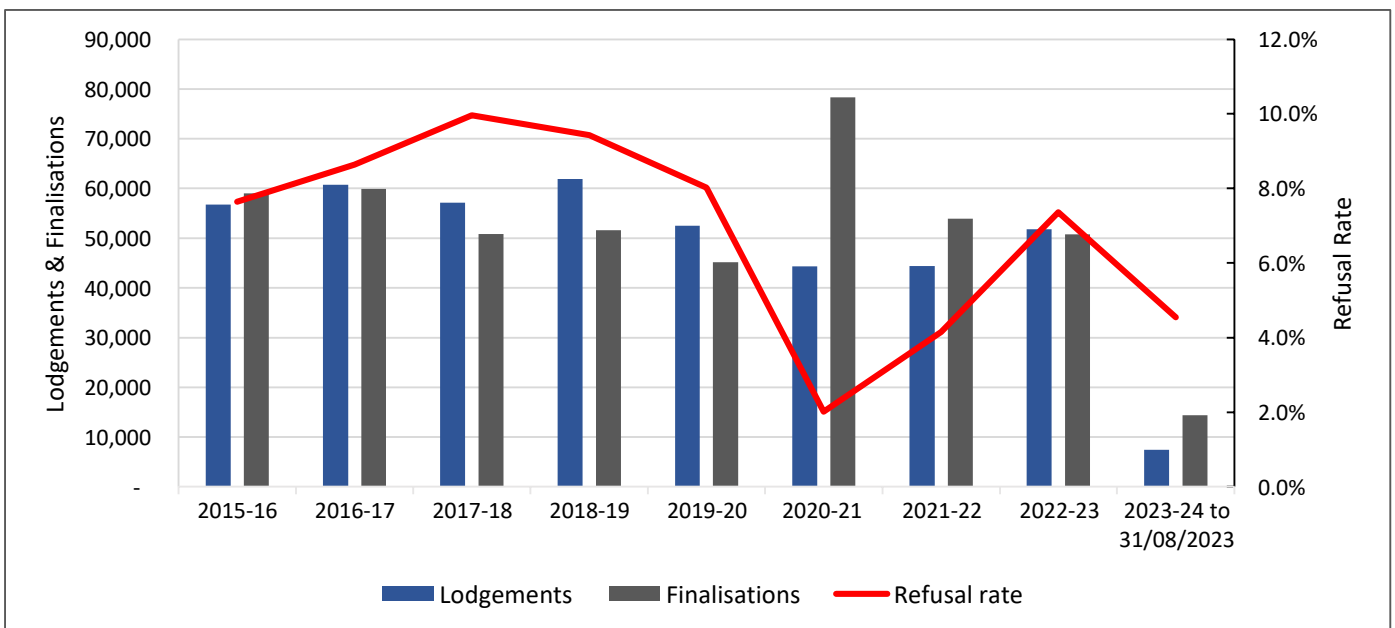
Designated Area Migration Agreements

70. 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. As at 31 August 2023, 12 DAMAs were in place.
71. Under the terms of these agreements, employers are able to sponsor overseas workers via a DAMA Labour Agreement for temporary, provisional or permanent visas, with a range of concessions not available under the standard visa programs.
72. The number of employers utilising DAMA Labour Agreements continues to grow. As at 31 August 2023, there were 874 DAMA Labour Agreements in effect, compared to 423 agreements in effect as at 31 August 2022. This reflects an increase of greater than 100 per cent within one year.
73. In the 2023-24 program year (until 31 August 2023), the demand for DAMA Labour Agreements has reduced slightly, with 60 agreement requests lodged compared to 75 during the same period in the 2022-23 program year. As at 31 August 2023, a total of 2,454 visas were granted under a DAMA (this includes 1,202 primary and 1,252 dependents).
74. For more information on Designated Area Migration Agreements see paragraphs 124-129 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Family Program

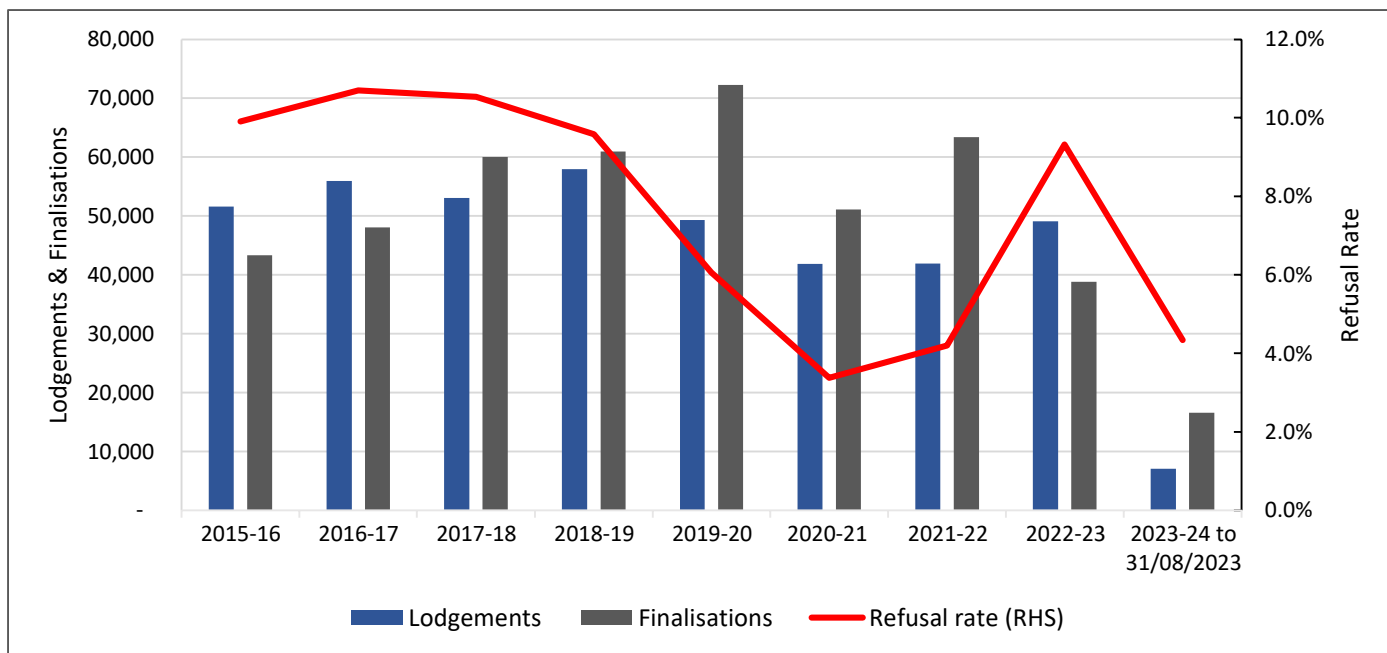
Partner visas

Figure 12 First Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015-16 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Figure 13 Second Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015-16 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

75. In 2022-23, 52,500 family stream places were delivered including 40,500 partner visas, which accounted for 27 per cent of the total 2022-23 Migration Program outcome.
76. For more information on the Family Program see paragraphs 130-153 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Relationship between temporary and permanent migration

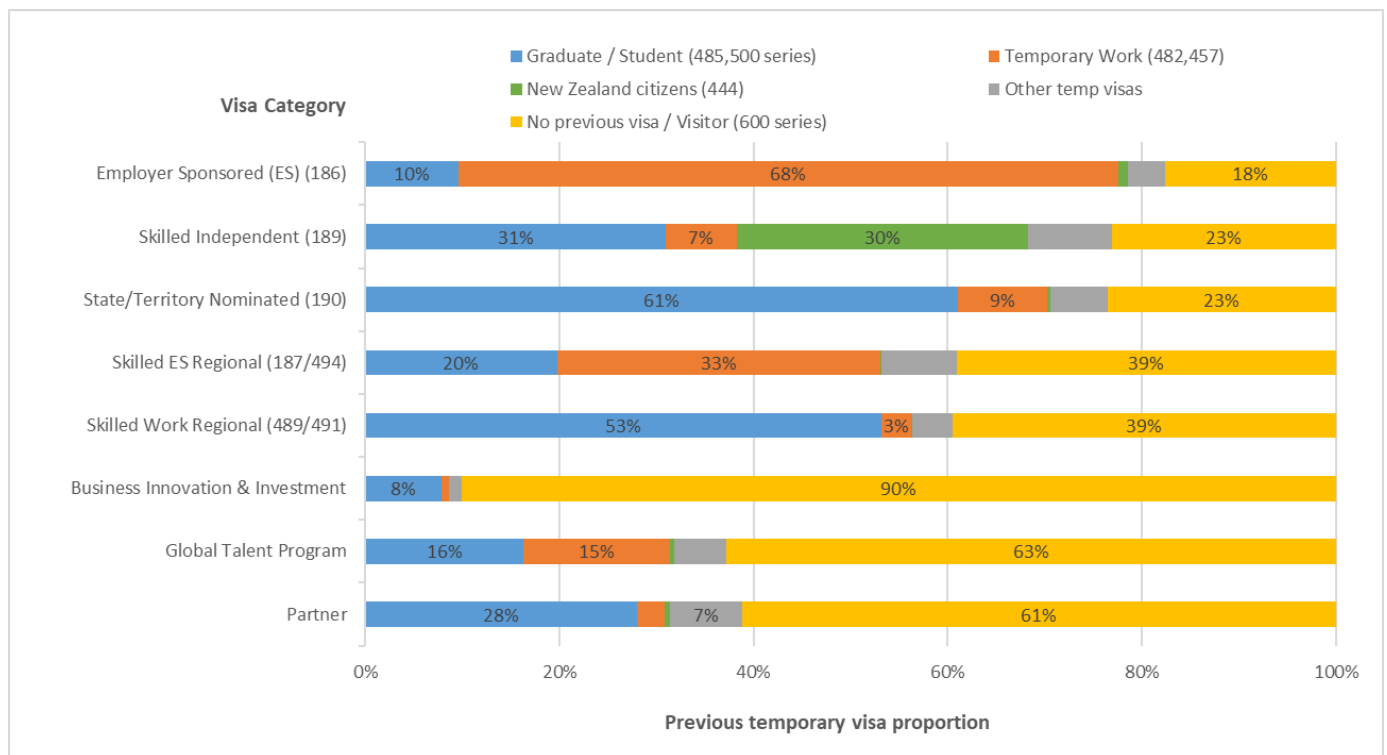
77. Temporary migrants are a major source of permanent Skill stream visa applications, with a number of visas providing a pathway from temporary to permanent residence for those who have demonstrated their ability to contribute to the Australian economy.
78. Within the Skill stream, the Employer Sponsored category was most reliant on applications made by Temporary Work visa holders. Within the State/Territory Nominated, Skilled Work Regional and Skilled Independent categories, a significant proportion of visa grants were to Graduate and Student visa holders (see Figure 14).
79. For more information on the relationship between temporary and permanent migration, see paragraphs 154-156 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 12 Number of permanent primary visa applications lodged by client location, 2021-22 and 2022-23

Visa category	2021-22			2022-23		
	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total
Child	893	2,747	3,640	1,887	3,217	5,104
Family	54,522	35,570	90,092	65,951	41,898	107,849
Other Permanent	19	<105	<125	4,773	135	4,908
Resident Return/ADV ¹¹	107,333	37,522	144,855	179,639	48,517	228,156
Skilled	53,237	10,009	63,246	83,577	29,180	112,757
Special Eligibility	103	<5	107	64	8	72
Total	216,107	85,956	302,063	335,891	122,955	458,846

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Figure 14 Proportion of permanent visas granted where a temporary visa was previously held, 2022-23



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

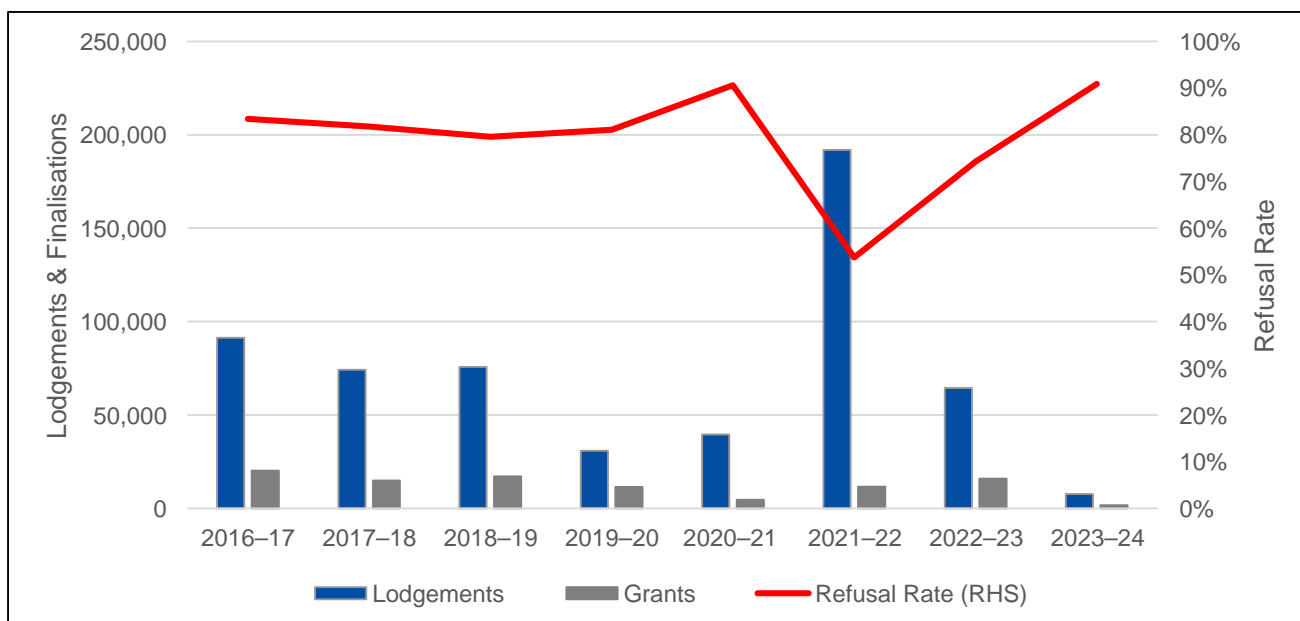
¹¹ Australian Declaratory visa: is an administrative process that connects a person's status as an Australian citizen with a non-Australian travel document the person holds.

Humanitarian Program

80. Australia's 2022-23 Humanitarian Program was delivered in full, with 15,875 visas granted in the Offshore program (including the 4,125 additional places allocated to Afghan nationals) and 2,000 visas granted in the Onshore (Protection visa) program.
81. A total of 17,875 Humanitarian visas were granted, marking the first time Australia's Humanitarian Program has been fully delivered since 2018-19.
82. 2022-23 also saw the highest number of Community Support Program (CSP) visa grants since the program's inception in 2018.
83. Australia's 2023-24 Humanitarian Program has increased from 17,875 to 20,000 places.
84. This commitment will ensure that we can provide permanent resettlement to those most in need from around the world, and protection in Australia to those who require it.
85. For more information on the Humanitarian Program see paragraphs 157-160 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Offshore Humanitarian visas

Figure 15 Offshore Humanitarian program trends, 2016-17 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

86. For more information on Offshore Humanitarian visas see paragraph 161 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Dedicated places for Afghan nationals

87. The Government is committed to supporting the Afghan community, with 16,500 places allocated for Afghan nationals under the Humanitarian Program delivered over four years from 2022-23 to 2025-26. This is in addition to the 10,000 places for Afghan nationals within the Offshore Humanitarian program.
88. For more information see paragraphs 162-164 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

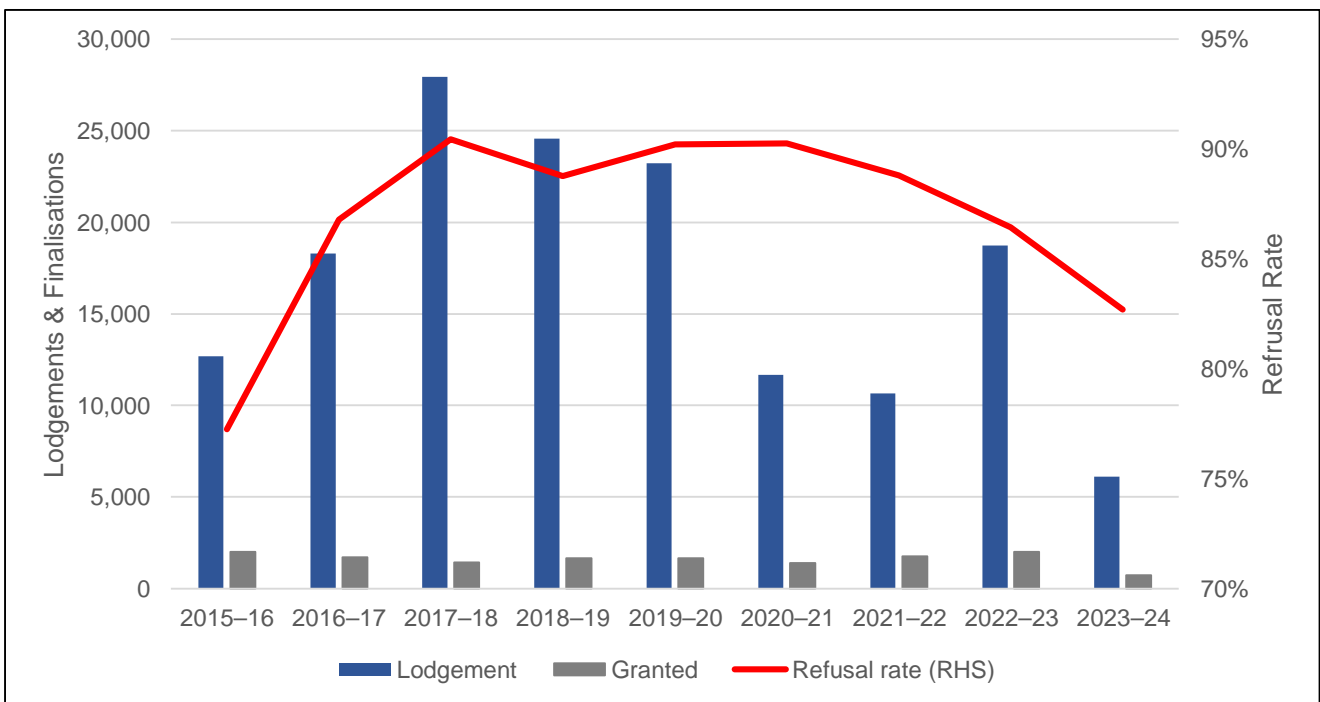
Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors

- 89. 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, 89 grants in 2022-2023 and <5 grants in 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023).
- 90. For more information see paragraphs 171-172 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Onshore Protection

- 91. For individuals granted a Protection Visa (subclass 866), the top ten countries of citizenship for 2020-21 until 2023-24 (as at 31 August 2023) are shown at Table 14.
- 92. For more information on Onshore protection see paragraphs 173-178 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Figure 16 Protection program trends, 2015-16 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 13 Permanent Protection visa grants and grant rates, 2020-21 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Citizenships (Top 10)*	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Granted	Grant rate	Granted	Grant rate	Granted	Grant rate	Granted	Grant rate
Myanmar	7	23%	33	69%	427	91%	196	99%
China (Exc. Sar)	90	2%	149	4%	255	8%	17	3%
Pakistan	151	42%	140	53%	171	60%	35	56%
Papua New Guinea	24	65%	84	51%	94	63%	14	78%
Iran	202	68%	218	81%	89	93%	6	50%
Afghanistan	79	84%	110	94%	83	94%	28	97%
Iraq	81	76%	37	62%	80	82%	35	81%
Ethiopia	13	68%	71	69%	78	84%	15	94%
Venezuela	51	60%	76	67%	51	98%	12	100%
Malaysia	57	2%	58	2%	46	2%	38	16%
Other	634	...	786	...	626	...	154	...
Grand Total	1389	10%	1762	11%	2000	14%	550	19%

*Top 10 citizenship is based on the 2022-23 program year

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA) Legacy Caseload

93. As at 31 August 2023, there were 12,585 people with a Resolution of Status (RoS) visa application on hand and there had been 6,401 RoS visa grants.
94. For more information see paragraphs 179-183 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

95. The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2023. The AMEP is Australia's longest running settlement program and has helped over 2 million migrants and humanitarian entrants with free English language lessons since 1948. The 75th anniversary has provided an opportunity to showcase the program, celebrate its significant contribution to Australia's social cohesion, and promote awareness of the long-term benefits for participants.
96. The AMEP assists migrants and humanitarian entrants with low English levels to improve their English language skills so they can successfully settle and participate more fully in Australia. Recently published longitudinal research has found that AMEP participation is associated with reduced reliance on income support, improved labour force participation and higher income.
97. Further information about the AMEP is available on the Department's website at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/amep/about-the-program>.

Relaunch of AMEPOnline

98. As part of the 75th anniversary celebrations, AMEPOnline was relaunched on 1 July 2023. The updated AMEPOnline is a free English language-learning website available to anyone, anywhere and anytime via mobile phone or computer. AMEPOnline now offers a wide range of contemporary, engaging, interactive, audio and video activities to support English learners across five English levels, including beginner levels.

99. AMEPOne contains one Australian Citizenship module; three more modules will be released in late 2023. The four modules are based on the four parts of the testable section of *Australian Citizenship - Our Common Bond* (OCB). Australian Citizenship modules are intended to support English language learners engage with the OCB content via character storylines, videos, visuals, translation and interactive learning activities. The Citizenship module includes key words translated into 10 common AMEP learner languages.
100. AMEPOne has reported very high levels of engagement since its relaunch, with over 100,000 users accessing the platform since 1 July. AMEPOne can help support migrants and humanitarian entrants on their English learning journey long before they come to Australia.

Australian Citizenship Program

101. Applications for Australian citizenship generally fall within four categories: conferral (the most common way of acquiring citizenship through application, represents approximately 90 per cent of all applications), descent, adoption, and resumption.
102. 192,947 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral in the 2022-23 program year. This is an increase from 167,232 in 2021-22. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 32,792 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral.
103. For more information on the Australian Citizenship Program see paragraphs 184-185 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Citizenship by conferral

104. More than 198,000 citizenship by conferral applications were finalised in 2022-23. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), more than 42,000 citizenship by conferral applications have been finalised, representing an increase of 32 per cent in comparison to the same period in the 2022-23 program year.
105. For more information see paragraphs 186-189 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 14 Number of Australian citizenship by conferral applications finalised, by decision type and financial year, 2013-14 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Program year	Approved	Refused	Invalid	Other ¹²	Total
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	185,419	8,705	3,629	1,055	198,808
2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)	39,941	1,816	745	208	42,710

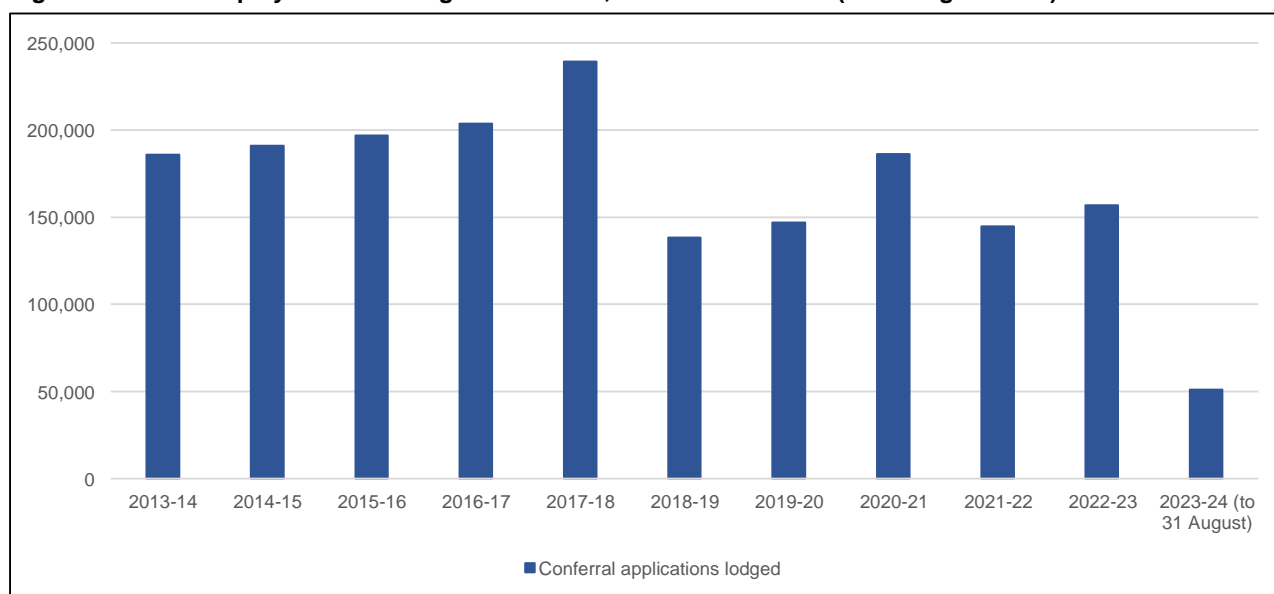
Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

106. Since 2021-22, citizenship finalisations have continued to increase from previous years due to the reopening of all citizenship testing sites after COVID-19 lockdowns and the Department's effort to reduce on-hand citizenship applications.

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

108. There continues to be strong interest from migrants applying to become Australian citizens. In 2022-23, 156,831 applications for citizenship by conferral were lodged. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 51,080 applications for citizenship by conferral were lodged.

Figure 17 Citizenship by conferral lodgement trends, 2013-14 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

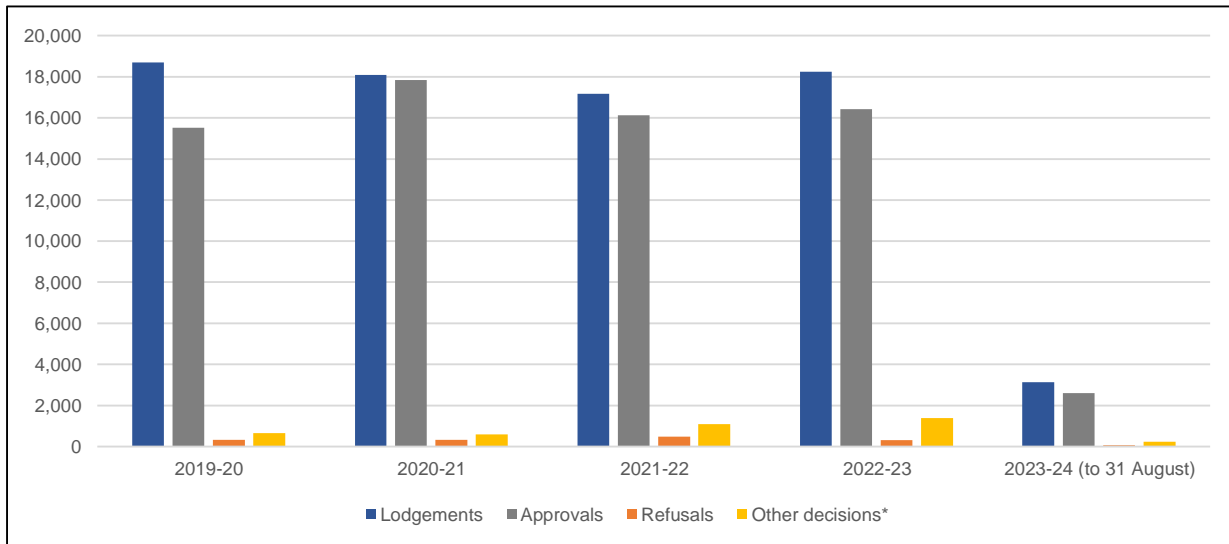
¹² Other includes applications withdrawn by the client and minor numbers of administrative finalisations.

Citizenship by descent

109. In 2022-23, 16,424 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent (see Figure 18). This represents a two per cent decrease over the 2021-22 program year. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 2,599 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

110. For more information see paragraphs 190-192 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Figure 18 Citizenship by descent applications lodged and finalised, 2019-20 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)¹³



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

111. In 2022-23, 222 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, Georgia, Canada, Mexico and Columbia. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 56 children born through surrogacy arrangements acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

Citizenship by adoption

112. Children adopted outside of Australia by an Australian citizen under the Hague Convention or a bilateral arrangement, may apply for Australian citizenship. 14 children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption in 2022-23, a decrease from 28 in the previous program year. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), no children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption.

113. For more information see paragraph 193 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Citizenship by resumption

114. 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 2022-23, 96 people had resumed Australian citizenship, compared to 60 in the previous program year. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 16 people resumed Australian citizenship.

115. For more information see paragraph 194 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

¹³ Other decisions include invalidated applications, applications withdrawn by the client and administrative finalisations.

Citizenship service delivery

116. As at 31 August 2023, the number of on-hand conferral applications was 88,310, a 24 per cent decrease since 31 August 2022 (115,737 on-hand).
117. The average processing time from lodgement to decision for applications decided in August 2023 has decreased by 53 per cent from August 2022 (from 354 days to 168 days).
118. 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 2022-23, 190,694 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony. Of these 187,673 attended in person and 3,021 online. In 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023), 31,441 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony (31,345 in person, 96 online).
119. For more information on citizenship service delivery see paragraphs 195-201 the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

New Zealand Direct Pathway

120. The Department has implemented the Government's priority of providing a direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens.
121. In the period 1 July - 31 August 2023 (inclusive), the Department of Home Affairs received 22,779 citizenship by conferral applications from New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category (subclass 444) visa (SCV). These represent 45 per cent of all citizenship by conferral applications received in this period.
122. As at 31 August 2023, of the 22,779 Australian citizenship by conferral applications received since 1 July 2023 from New Zealand citizens holding a SCV, 766 applications have been approved.

Managing risk and community protection

123. For more information on managing risk and community protection see paragraphs 202-210 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

124. In Australia, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery are criminalised under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)* (Criminal Code) *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 Australian Border Force (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 Reporting Protocol* (the Reporting Protocol).
125. Between 1 April and 31 August 2023, the Department, including the ABF, referred eight suspected cases of human trafficking and modern slavery to the AFP for investigation under the established Reporting Protocol.
126. 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 them 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.
127. 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.
128. For more information see paragraphs 211-214 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

People smuggling

129. 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 1958* (Migration Act) and Criminal Code. The AFP leads the Australian Government's investigations into people smuggling offences.
130. For more information see paragraph 215 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Maritime People Smuggling

131. Between 18 September 2013 and 31 August 2023, Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB) intercepted and safely returned 1,123 potential irregular immigrants (PIIs) from 47 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 104 maritime people smuggling ventures and 3,539 PIIs¹⁴ that are believed to have been targeting Australian territorial waters.
132. It has been almost 10 years since the last known death at sea from maritime people smuggling ventures en-route to Australia, and almost 10 years since the arrival of the last successful people smuggling venture to Australia.¹⁵
133. For more information see paragraphs 216-220 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Migrant worker exploitation

134. Exploitation, as defined in Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code, involves slavery and slavery-like practices and human trafficking. However, a range of other behaviours can also be considered exploitative, including the underpayment of wages and entitlements, working conditions that are unsafe, unfair dismissal, threats and coercion. For the purpose of this section, exploitation is not confined by the definitions outlined in the Criminal Code.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 'Successful' maritime people smuggling ventures are defined in this context as those not disrupted, turned back, returned, or transferred to a regional processing country (RPC).

135. All people working in Australia have the same basic workplace rights and protection, regardless of citizenship or visa status. Employment contracts or agreements cannot take away a worker's rights. The FWO protects and enforces the rights of visa holders. The Department and the FWO developed an Assurance Protocol to encourage migrant workers to report exploitation. Under this Assurance Protocol, the Department's policy is not to cancel the visa of a person who has breached a work related condition, provided:
- workers believe they have been exploited at work, and sought advice or support from the FWO and are helping the FWO with its inquiries
 - workers commit to abiding by visa conditions in the future
 - there are no other grounds for visa cancellation (such as on national security, character, fraud or health grounds).
136. The Assurance Protocol aims to balance the ongoing integrity of the migration program with encouraging increased reporting of migrant worker exploitation. As at 31 August 2023, 91 migrant workers have been referred under the Assurance Protocol (since its commencement in February 2017) and none of the referrals resulted in visa cancellation.
137. For more information on migrant worker exploitation see paragraphs 221-230 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 15 ABF Migrant Worker Enforcement Activities

Enforcement Activity	2022-23	2023-24 (to 31 Aug 2023)
Employer awareness activities	294	196
Illegal Worker Warning Notices issued	60	30
Infringement notices issued	8	7
Sponsors sanctioned	309	55
Total organisation registered with VEVO (as at 30 June)	153,159	155,856

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System

138. On 16 January 2023, the Minister O'Neil appointed Ms Christine Nixon, AO, APM to undertake a Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System (the Nixon Review). In conducting the Review, Ms Nixon consulted widely with relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies, and other relevant organisations. Ms Nixon also considered findings of previous and ongoing reviews and inquiries, and regulatory approaches in relevant overseas jurisdictions, to identify recommendations or insights to address the issues identified.
139. The Nixon Review affirmed that the integrity of Australia's migration system was being undermined through a number of gaps and weaknesses. The Review outlined recommendations for systemic reform and discrete measures to remedy the gaps that allowed the migration system to be exploited. The report complements work that is already being progressed by the Department to address migrant worker exploitation and the need to align State and Commonwealth approaches.
140. On 4 October 2023, the Government released the declassified Nixon Review, accompanied by a whole-of-Government response to its 34 recommendations. The Government has carefully considered the Nixon Review's findings to inform its response - agreeing, agreeing-in-part or agreeing-in-principle to 24 of the 34 recommendations, noting eight recommendations and disagreeing with two recommendations. Substantial consultation was undertaken with other agencies, including collaboration on the Government Response.

Specific Reforms

141. Announcements made by the Minister included the intention to bring together the immigration compliance functions currently delivered by the Department of Home Affairs and by the ABF. This alignment of functions will strengthen the integrity of Australia's migration system in response to the findings of the Nixon Review.
142. As a result of the announced intention, a new division reporting to Associate Secretary Immigration will be formed. The new division will bring ABF's field compliance, sponsor monitoring and intelligence support together with the existing status resolution and visa cancellation functions to create an integrated end-to-end system. The new integrated division is expected to better connect departmental and ABF officers so they can work seamlessly to deliver on the Minister's priority of ensuring the integrity of the migration system, including by tackling migrant worker exploitation and misuse of the visa system.
143. Operation INGLENOK, a highly successful ABF-led multi-agency operation tasked with deterring and disrupting the exploitation of Australia's visa program, will be integrated into the new compliance function. Operation INGLENOK will become an enduring capability, working closely with Australian and state and territory law enforcement agencies, to focus efforts against systematic migrant worker exploitation and misuse of the visa and migration system. The redesigned compliance function will also work closely with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), to ensure continuity with existing referral mechanisms for matters within AFP scope, including suspected or alleged human trafficking activity.
144. In addition, reforms to address the Australian migration advice industry will strengthen the regulation of Registered Migrant Agents (RMAs), including the introduction of more comprehensive background checks for RMAs through the AusCheck scheme.¹⁶ While the vast majority of RMAs do the right thing, the Nixon Review identified a small but highly organised cohort of corrupt agents who are utilising their knowledge of our migration laws to abuse our visa system, including to facilitate the exploitation of vulnerable migrants.
145. The Nixon Review also identifies the harm caused by unlawful providers of immigration assistance (UPIAs), who do not meet the legal criteria for providing migration advice. UPIAs pose a high-risk to Australia's visa system, since neither their knowledge of migration law nor their character can be guaranteed. UPIAs can cause substantial harm to vulnerable migrants, either through the provision of false or misleading immigration assistance, or through unethical practices. The Nixon Review makes several recommendations for how to better respond to the threat that our migration system faces from UPIAs and unethical RMAs, which will also be considered.
146. Additional resourcing and powers will be provided to the OMARA to enable it to better investigate corrupt migration agents and refer complaints about UPIAs to the appropriate authorities. These include the following measures:
- an uplift to staffing levels for the OMARA, to assist it in regulating RMAs and in preparing complaints referrals regarding UPIAs
 - strengthening the Fit & Proper Person (FPP) and person of integrity assessment framework for RMAs, to ensure individuals applying to become RMAs are more thoroughly vetted before they can register and at subsequent renewal of their registration
 - introducing additional tools for the OMARA to utilise when investigating or sanctioning RMAs who do the wrong thing.

¹⁶ AusCheck is a background check which includes a criminal history check by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, a national security assessment by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and a 'right to work in Australia' check if you are an Australian visa holder.

Cancellations

Table 16 Adverse section 501 (character) cancellations, 2021-22 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Character cancellation	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Mandatory Cancellation (s501(3A))	615	616	94
Natural Justice – (s501(2))	34	<5	<5
Cancellation without Natural Justice – National Interest (s501(3)(b))	<5	<10	0
Minister's personal power – without notice (s501A(3)(b))	<5	0	0
Minister's personal power – with notice (s501B(2))	<5	0	0
Character refusal	209	143	<25
Character revocations (not revoked) ¹⁷	433	369	87
Total	1,298	1,137	203

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Table 17 Top five citizenships with adverse section 501 (character) outcomes, 2021-22 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Character cancellation	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
New Zealand	248	262	38	548
United Kingdom	71	36	7	114
Vietnam	43	35	6	84
China	<20	26	<10	48
Malaysia	<20	21	<5	42
Other	260	245	36	541
Total	656	625	96	1,377
Character refusal	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
United Kingdom	44	23	<5	71
New Zealand	17	20	5	42
United States Of America	20	<10	<5	28
Iran	10	<10	<5	19
India	7	11	0	18
Other	111	75	8	194
Total	209	143	20	372
Character revocations (not revoked)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
New Zealand	180	134	32	346
United Kingdom	35	<20	<5	56
Sudan	15	20	5	40
Vietnam	22	<15	<5	39
Iraq	7	<20	<5	27
Other	174	166	41	381
Total	433	369	87	889

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

¹⁷ This refers to where a non-citizen's request for reinstatement of a visa (revocation of the character cancellation) is not successful.

Table 18 General cancellation decisions, 2021-22 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)¹⁸

General cancellation decisions	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Incorrect information (s109)	539	145	20
General power (s116)	924	1884	369
Holder overseas (s128)	20,080	10,934	3,152
Business visa (s134)	72	112	6
All other powers ¹⁹	2,802	2,016	361
Total	24,417	15,091	3,908

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

147. Student visa cancellations account for the bulk of the cancellation activity under s128. It is expected cancellation volumes will increase over the coming months.

148. For more information on visa cancellations see paragraphs 237-240 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Status resolution

149. 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. Status Resolution Officers work with non-citizens in held detention, residence determination (community detention) and individuals residing in the community on Bridging E Visas (BVEs), who require assistance to resolve their immigration status.

150. Individuals may enter the Status Resolution program by voluntarily approaching the Department to seek assistance in resolving their immigration status or through location and enforcement activities conducted by the ABF and/or police.

151. For more information on status resolution see paragraphs 241-243 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

¹⁸ 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 system environment, the figures provided may differ slightly in previous or future reporting.

¹⁹ Does not include any s501 character statistics, only s501Fs are included.

Entering the Status Resolution program

Table 19 People who entered the Status Resolution program, 2021-22 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (as at 31 August 2023)
Persons who voluntarily approached the Department	12,455	10,007	1,539
Persons located by the Australian Border Force or police	1,639	1,755	345
Total	14,094	11,762	1,884

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

152. 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 August 2023

Status Resolution population	Bridging E visa in effect	Residence Determination	Held detention	Total
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA)	8,241	238	130	8,609
Non-UMA	17,629	44	926	18,599
Total	25,870	282	1,056	27,208

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

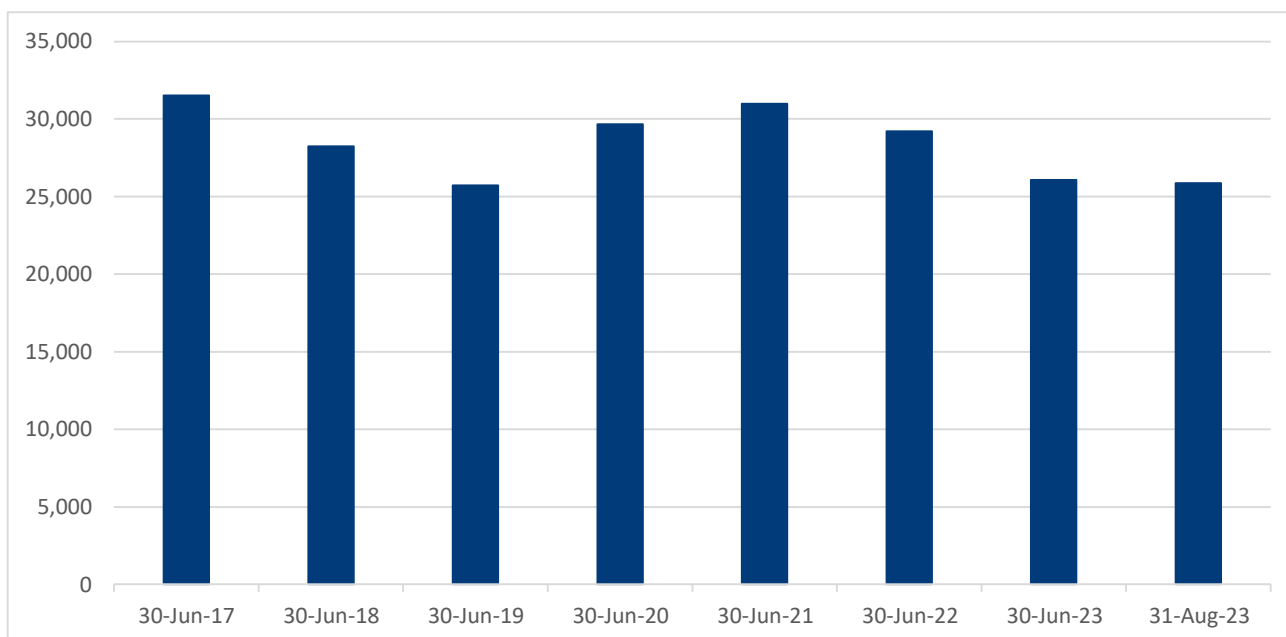
Bridging E (subclass 050) visas (BVE)

153. 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 (is granted a substantive visa or departs Australia). 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.

154. For more information see paragraph 244 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Figure 19 Number of Bridging E visa holders in Australia, 30 June 2017 to 31 August 2023 ²⁰



Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Status Resolution Support Services

155. The Status Resolution Support Services Program (SRSS) provides targeted needs-based support to eligible asylum seekers and other non-citizens 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.

156. For more information see paragraph 245 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

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

	30 June 2021	30 June 2022	30 June 2023	31 August 2023
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMAs)	1,311	895	803	765
Non-UMAs	1,018	711	738	752
Total	2,329	1,606	1,541	1,517

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Leaving the Status Resolution program

157. Non-citizens exit the Status Resolution program once their immigration status is resolved. A non-citizen's status can be resolved through the grant of a substantive visa; acquiring citizenship; having their substantive visa re-instated, or via departure from Australia.

158. For more information see paragraph 246 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

²⁰ Includes Bridging E visa (subclasses 050 and 051).

Table 22 Departures from Australia of Status Resolution clients, 2019-20 to 2023-24 (31 August 2023)

Departures from Australia	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (as at 31 August 2023)
Returns from community	7,352	9,804	7,215	6,012	697
Removals from immigration detention	3,286	1,040	1,263	2,274	423
Total	10,638	10,844	8,478	8,286	1,120

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Return and Reintegration Assistance Program

159. The Return and Reintegration Assistance Program (RRAP) assists eligible non-citizens who wish to depart Australia voluntarily but require assistance to do so. By facilitating voluntary departure, the RRAP program assists non-citizens to resolve their immigration status. Assistance may include confidential, independent returns counselling, assistance to obtain travel documents and support to purchase airfares. The reintegration assistance component provides additional assistance for eligible UMAs to re-establish themselves in their country of return. Reintegration assistance can include cash and in-kind assistance, to support them to rebuild their lives in the return country.

160. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on individuals' ability to depart Australia and consequently the number of returns through the program declined in recent years. The Department is engaging with the Status Resolution community to promote take-up in the program.

161. For more information on the Return and Reintegration Assistance Program see paragraph 247 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

Table 23 RRAP referrals and returns 2019-20 to 2023-24 (to 31 August 2023)

Returns and Reintegration Assistance	2019-20	2020-2021	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (to 31 Aug 2023)
Referrals	1,484	1,117	590	602	116
Returns	798	541	309	317	63

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

Management of transitory persons

162. As at 31 August 2023, there were 1,104 transitory persons²¹ in the regional processing cohort residing temporarily in Australia (Table 24).

Table 24 Transitory persons onshore as at 31 August 2023

	Bridging E visa ^{22, 23}	Residence Determination ²⁴	Held detention	Total
All transitory persons	880	<225	<5	1,104

Source: Department of Home Affairs, 2023

163. 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

²¹ 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.

²² Includes 30 people residing in the community with a ceased BVE.

²³ Includes <5 babies who had not yet been granted a visa who were born to transitory persons holding a BVE.

²⁴ Includes <5 babies born to transitory persons but not yet subject to residence determination.

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.

164. Transitory persons do not have a settlement pathway in Australia. They are encouraged to engage in available third country migration options (including resettlement in the United States or New Zealand) or to voluntarily return home or to another country to which they have right of entry. As at 31 August 2023, 1,245 resettlement outcomes have been achieved for transitory persons, including 1,084 to the United States²⁵ and 70 to New Zealand.
165. Transitory persons can continue to pursue third country migration options while they remain in Australia for a temporary purpose. During this time they have a range of support available to them, to help them connect with their available migration options, become settlement ready and depart.
166. For more information on the management of transitory persons see paragraphs 248-250 of the eleventh edition of *The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper.

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²⁵ US resettlement figure includes individuals who departed Papua New Guinea from 1 January 2022 for resettlement under the US-Australia resettlement arrangement. This figure includes 15 family members resettled under the US resettlement arrangement, whom are not part of the regional processing caseload.