Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

The Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs

14th Edition (February 2025)

Highlights on Australia's Immigration and Citizenship Programs

Key developments

Migration Strategy

Over 25 new policy commitments and areas for future reform

Launch of the Skills in Demand (SID) and National Innovation Visa (NIV)

An extended Business Visitor visa introduced for ASEAN

Sustainable growth in International Education

Inaugural Pacific Engagement Visa ballot closed with 56,133 valid primary registrations

Migration Planning

In the 2023-24 program year, the Department fully delivered the Migration Program against the overall planning level of 190,000 places.

Addressing skill and labour shortages

Over 12,000 PALM visas granted

As at 10 January 2025, the Department granted 2,649 visas under the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement.

As at 10 January 2025, there were 113 Aged Care Industry Labour Agreements in effect, which can provide for more than 29,000 direct care workers, subject to demand.

As of 31 December 2024, Australia has WHM program arrangements with 50 partner countries and regions.

In December 2024, Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) announced.

Highlights on Australia's Immigration and Citizenship Programs

Data updates to the start of 2025

Supporting tourism through Visitor visas

In 2024-25 to 31 December 2024, Visitor visa application lodgements increased by 3.1 per cent

On 31 December 2024 there were 629,075 Visitor visa holders in Australia- an increase of 4.7 per cent year on year

The Australian Immi App was released 26 September 2024 with an initial roll-out across the Pacific

Supporting International protection obligations through Humanitarian & Program

As of 10 December 2024, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) had recorded 53,915 enrolments in the 2024-25 year.

As at 31 December 2024, there have been 19,589 RoS visa grants. Australia's Humanitarian Program was delivered in full, with 20,000 visas granted in 2023-24

16,750 offshore visas

3,250 Protection visas

Outreach and Consultations

Through its Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO) network, facilitated and participated in more than 2,530 engagements with stakeholders.

Consultations on a range of issues such as Points test, regional migration, and essential pathways were conducted to inform evidence based policy design.

Citizenship program

Over 6 million people from 200 countries welcomed as Australia citizens since 1949

In 2024-25 to 31 December 2024, 72,383 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony (72,116 in-person and 267 online).

More than 75,900 New Zealanders have applied under the direct pathway to Australian citizenship since its commencement on 1 July 2023

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acronyms

ABF	Australian Border Force
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWOTE	Average weekly ordinary time earnings
BNO	British National Overseas
BV	Bridging Visas
BV ABC	Bridging A, B and C Visa
BE	Bridging E (subclass 050) Visa
DAMA	Designated Area Migration Agreement
FWO	Fair Work Ombudsman
HTVF	Human Trafficking Visa Framework
NIV	National Innovation visa
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
PEV	Pacific Engagement Visa
PII	Potential irregular immigrants
RoS	Resolution of Status
RRAP	Return and Reintegration Assistance Program
SHEV	Safe Haven Enterprise Visa
SID	Skills in Demand
SCV	Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa
SRSS	Status Resolution Support Services
TGV	Temporary Graduate Visas
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
TSMIT	Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold
TSS	Temporary Skills Shortage
UHM	Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors
UMA	Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals
VEVO	Visa Entitlement Verification Online
WHM	Working Holiday Maker

Purpose

1. The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) has produced this paper to provide information about the composition and management of Australia's immigration and citizenship programs. This paper complements existing publicly available resources, including regular data publications, and provides a tri-annual overview of the Department's visa, citizenship, border and compliance programs and related developments.
2. The 14th edition of the *Administration of the Immigration and Citizenship Programs* paper includes data updated to the end of Quarter 2 of the 2024–25 program year (31 December 2024).

Introduction

3. Immigration is central to Australia's national story and identity. Australia is a proudly multicultural society that is enriched by the diverse cultures and skills of people from across the world. Today, more than half of all Australians are either born overseas or have a parent born overseas.
4. In times of change, immigration has helped Australia tackle national challenges and build long-term prosperity.
5. The Department continues to manage Australia's immigration program in a way that anticipates and responds to changes in both the domestic and international environment, to advance national interests and support migrants and their families.
6. The Department also supports the Government's reform agenda to deliver sustainable levels of migration, while attracting migrants that will help fill labour shortages, drive productivity growth in sectors of national importance that will benefit Australia's future prosperity.

Implementation of the Migration Strategy

7. Since the release of the Migration Strategy on 11 December 2023, the Government has continued to deliver on commitments to build a migration system that matches the needs of the nation and delivers for Australia and for migrants.
8. The policy roadmap set out in the Migration Strategy will better connect migrants to skills needs throughout Australia, enhance the integrity and quality of our international education sector, improve long-term migration planning and protect migrants from exploitation. Actions in the Migration Strategy will support the return of Net Overseas Migration levels to near pre-pandemic levels.
9. The Department is working with other Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments, and tripartite mechanisms, to implement key actions and commitments in the Migration Strategy. Progress of these commitments is described throughout this paper, under the respective programs and initiatives, and is also reflected in the 2024–25 Budget.
10. On 19 December 2024, the Government announced a new Ministerial Direction for Student Visa processing that supports the Government's priority of sustainable growth of the international education sector.
11. The National Innovation visa (NIV) was launched on 7 December 2024 and the Department has started receiving expressions of interest for the new visa.
12. The Skills in Demand (SID) visa launched on 7 December 2024 and replaced the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa.
13. On 3 December 2024, the Government announced the new Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) which applies to the Core Skills stream of the new SID visa. The CSOL fulfils the Government's commitment to replace complex, out of date and inflexible occupation lists in our temporary skilled visa program.
14. The Visitor visa Frequent Traveller Stream was rolled out to eligible passport-holders from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States (excluding Myanmar) and Timor-Leste on 7 December 2024.

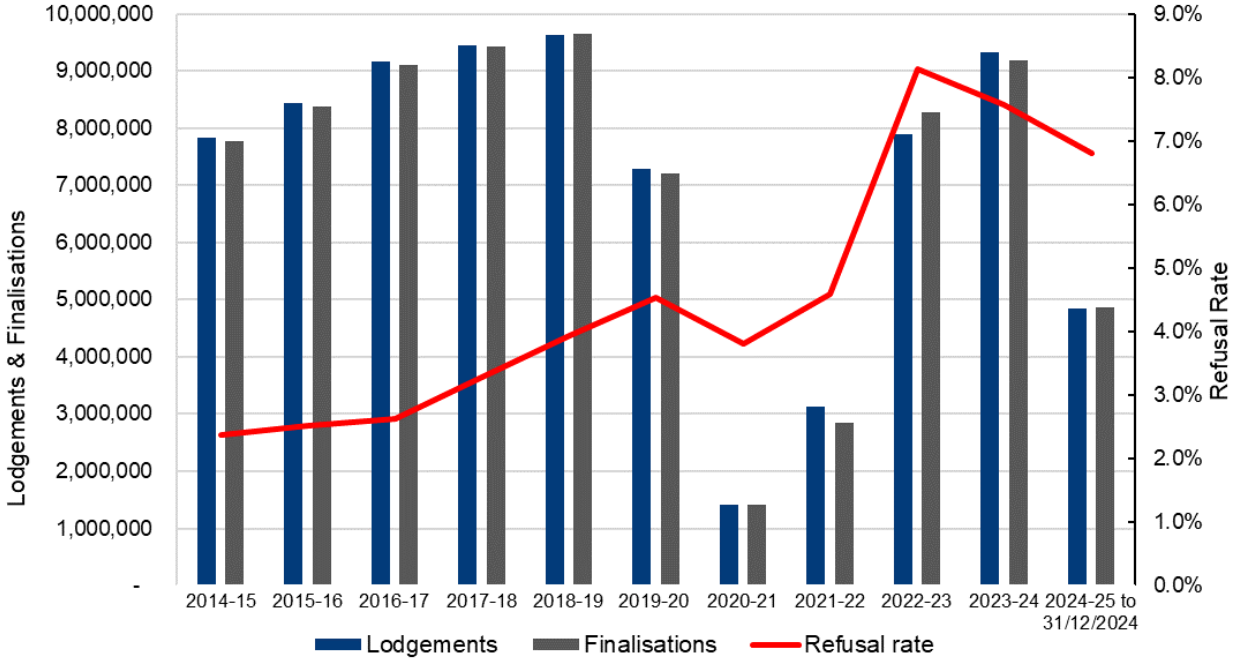
15. An extended Business Visitor visa product, providing up to five years validity, was introduced on 1 April 2024 for ASEAN (excluding Myanmar) and Timor Leste nationals.
16. The inaugural Pacific Engagement Visa ballot closed for online registrations on 16 August 2024. There were 56,133 valid primary registrations submitted across all 10 participating countries. As at 31 December 2024, a total of 1,485 PEV applications have been lodged with the Department.
17. The Department continues to deliver a range of targeted communication products and engagement activities to help strengthen the integrity of the Permanent Protection visa (PPV) program. More than 260 products including fact sheets, social media content, animations and case study videos have been created in 19 languages, to audiences in 14 target communities.
18. On 15 December 2023, Ministerial Direction (No.105) was issued to make visa processing for migrants sponsored by employers in regional Australia the top priority:
    - Planning levels in 2024–25 for Regional and State and Territory Nominated visa categories (at 33,000 places each) have been increased to help states and territories meet skill shortages.
    - This is an increase from roughly 33.0 per cent of the overall planning level and 46.0 per cent of the Skilled stream for the 2022–23 and 2023–24 program years.
19. Work is ongoing to evaluate the regional migration settings and the Working Holiday Maker program.

Administering the immigration program

Broad visa trends

20. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 December 2024, the Department received over 4,856,000 temporary and migration visa applications. This represents a 1.6 per cent increase in lodgements compared to the 4,780,000 applications lodged during the same period last year.
21. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 December 2024, the Department finalised over 4,866,000 temporary and migration visa applications.
22. The refusal rate for visa applications was around 7.0 per cent. This is attributed to the quality of visa applications received and the maturation of risk and integrity capability enabling visa decisions makers to more efficiently identify visa applicants who are intending to exploit visa programs.

Figure 1 Total non-humanitarian visa programs trends, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Visa Processing times

23. The Department has finalised 4.86 million Migration and Temporary visa applications in 2024–25 up to 31 December 2024, an increase of 2.6 per cent on the same period in 2023–24.
24. The Department finalised 92.3 per cent of the Temporary visas lodged in the three months to December 2024, and 97.0 per cent of those lodged in the last 12 months.
25. For the Permanent program, 46.4 per cent were lodged and finalised in the three months to December 2024 with 58.2 per cent in the last 12 months.
26. There has been some fluctuation in processing times for visa applications decided in the year-to-date 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, in comparison to the same period in 2023–24:
    - Partner (First Stage), increasing from 7 months to 10 months (an increase of 3 months (99 days))
    - Students, increasing from 17 days to 40 days (an increase of 23 days).
    - Temporary Resident (Skilled), increasing from 16 days to 48 days (an increase of 32 days).
    - Both Visitors and Working Holiday Makers have remained steady being processed in less than one (1) day.
27. Processing times will continue to fluctuate as the Department continues to implement new policy settings, promote lodgement of complete applications and streamline processes, while continuing to strengthen integrity and deter visa applicants who are intending to exploit visa programs.

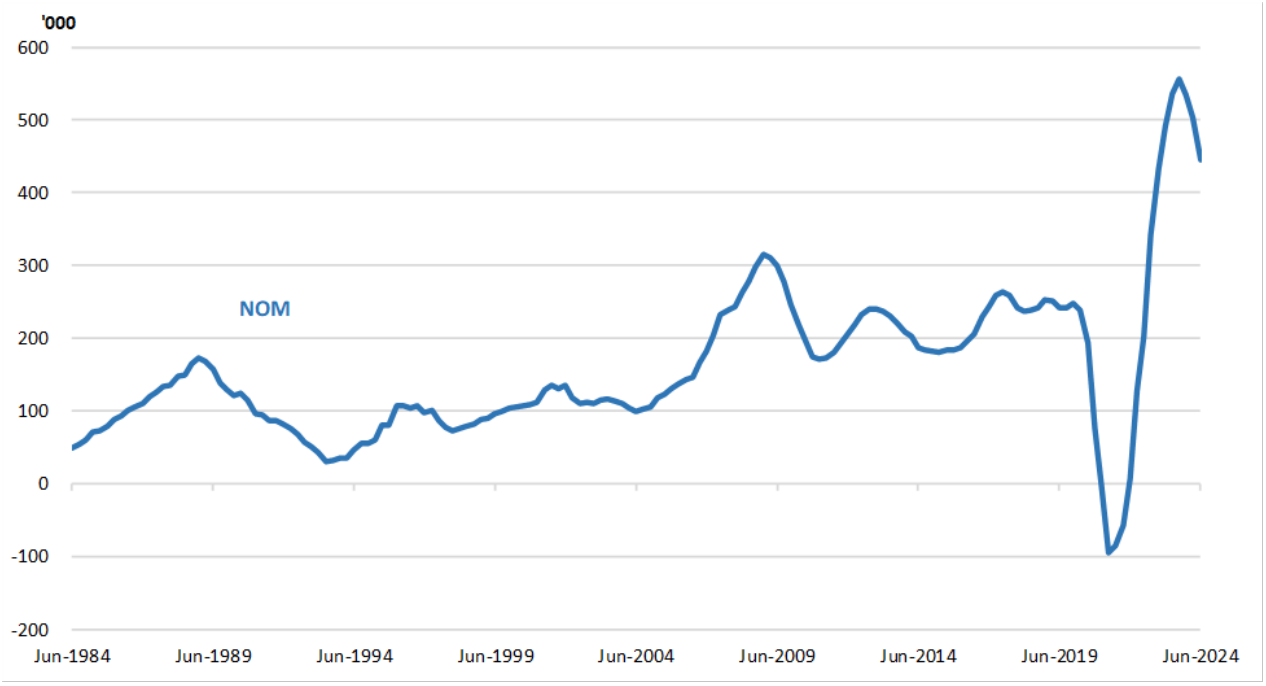
Net Overseas Migration

28. Net Overseas Migration (NOM) is a demographic concept and is the net gain or loss of population through immigration to Australia and emigration from Australia. It is not a legal or migration policy concept and can only be influenced indirectly by migration policy settings.
29. International statistical standards define a person as part of a country's population if they are in a country for more than 12 months. To allow for brief departures, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) considers the previous 16 months when determining whether a person is part of the Australian population. This means that NOM is calculated based on international movements in or out of Australia for 12 months or more, over a 16-month period. 'International movements' includes all arrivals and departures regardless of nationality, citizenship, or country of origin. As well as visa holders, NOM includes the arrivals and departures of Australian citizens and New Zealand citizens if they satisfy the 12 months in 16 definition.
30. The Department provides relevant data, analysis and insights, and advice on policy and administrative arrangements related to the management of the immigration program to inform Treasury forecasts.
31. Treasury is responsible for forecasting NOM through the Centre for Population. Treasury uses the Department's data, including visa grants and border movements, to inform their NOM forecasts. In addition, when preparing the NOM forecasts, Treasury considers data from a range of other sources relating to economic, domestic, international and global factors. Treasury forecasts are forward-looking and are included in the Budget Papers and the Population Statement. The ABS reports preliminary estimates and final outcomes of NOM based on the Department's data.
32. Historically, around 3.0 to 4.0 per cent of people arriving in Australia and 1.0 to 2.0 per cent of departures contribute to NOM. Most travellers either come for short periods or leave for short periods. For example, most tourists and short-term business travellers arrive and then depart (or depart and then return) within a few weeks.
33. The Department grants approximately 8 million temporary visas each year. Many of these visa holders depart within 12 months of their arrival and do not count towards NOM. Other visa holders do not count towards NOM at the time of the grant because they are extending existing stays, including approximately 60.0 per cent of permanent visas which are granted to onshore applicants under the permanent Migration program.
34. Some groups of temporary visa holders, such as Students, Working Holiday Makers and those on a Temporary Skill Shortage visa, tend to stay for multiple years to complete study and work commitments.

While some of these migrants go on to apply for subsequent temporary visas (such as the Temporary Graduate visa) or apply for permanent residence, many leave Australia once their studies and work contracts are complete. This results in a churn of temporary migrants in the country which had been reasonably stable prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

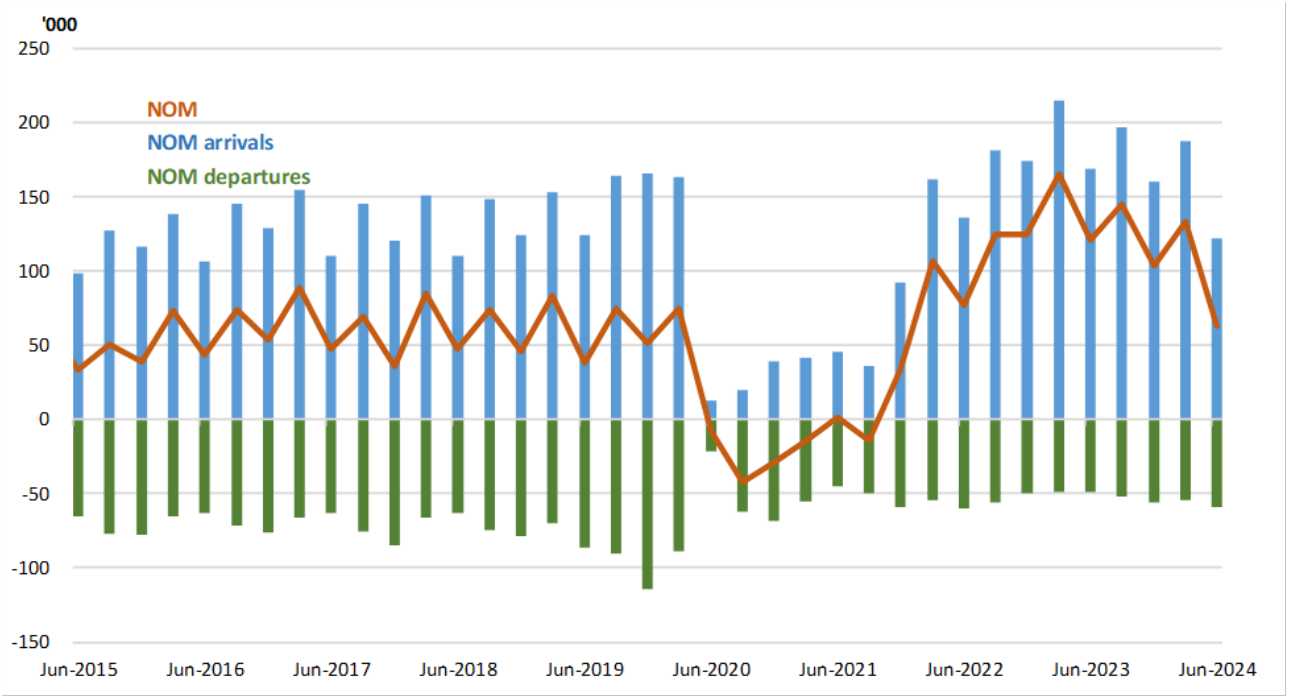
35. The pandemic border restrictions broke this cycle. During the pandemic, NOM levels were negative for the first time since the Second World War, with a NOM of -85,000 in 2020–21. Border restrictions led to a high degree of pent-up demand for travel and substantial domestic demand for skills, and in Australia's international education sector.
36. Global mobility after the pandemic saw temporary and permanent migrants returning to Australia in large numbers. However, the temporary visa holders who would normally have departed Australia after two or more years had already left at the start of the pandemic.
37. Accordingly, when demand for travel to Australia returned, arrivals re-started, but the cycle of departures had yet to return. Annual NOM for a financial year peaked at 536,000 in 2022–23 before declining to 446,000 in 2023–24 (Figure 2).
38. NOM was +63,200 in the June quarter 2024. This is the lowest quarter since border restrictions were lifted in December 2021. While departures by temporary migrants continue to be low, there are early indications they may pick up over 2025.
39. Australia's experience is similar to that of our international partners, including the United Kingdom and Canada, which have also seen increased demand from migrants seeking to work and study.

Figure 2 Net Overseas Migration, Australia, year-ending (June 1984 – June 2024)



Source: **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2024** - National, state and territory population, June 2024

Figure 3 Net Overseas Migration, Australia, quarterly, by direction



Source: **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2024** - National, state and territory population, June 2024

Table 1 Net Overseas Migration forecasts, financial years, 2023–24 to 2027–28

	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28
NOM, Australia	446,000	340,000	255,000	225,000	225,000

Source: **MYEFO 2024–25, Commonwealth of Australia, December 2024**

40. NOM is expected to continue to decline through to 2026–27. This will be driven, in part, by further falls in migrant arrivals, which are expected to stabilise from 2025–26. Departures of temporary visa holders are expected to pick up from 2024–25 and remain elevated, as those migrants who arrived shortly after border restrictions were lifted approach the expiry of their visas.

Temporary visas

41. Australia's temporary visa programs allow people to come to Australia for specific purposes, including to visit, study and work. These temporary visa programs deliver substantial economic and cultural benefits for both migrants and Australians. In particular, the student and visitor visa programs are key enablers to Australia's international education and tourism sectors.

42. A portion of temporary visa holders apply for an extension of temporary stay, while others seek a permanent stay through the Migration Program.

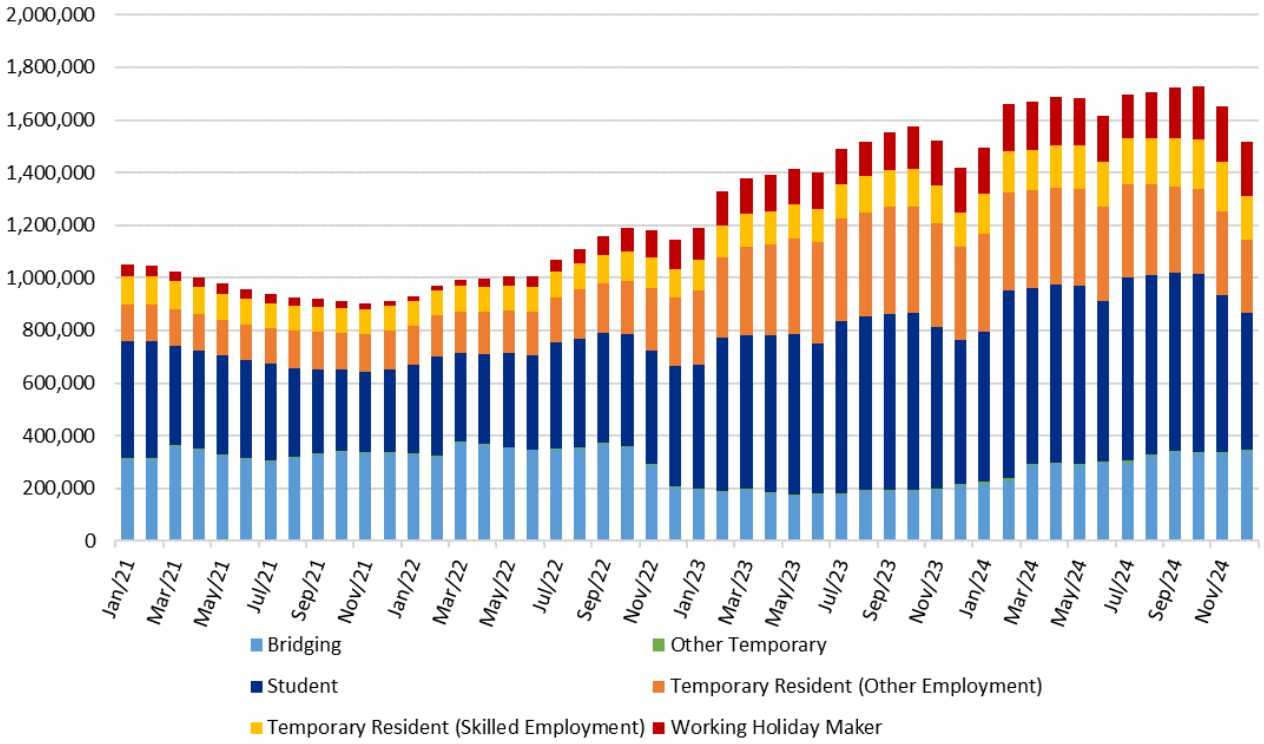
43. Bridging visas allow the visa holders to stay lawfully in Australia while waiting for the Department's outcome of their visa application or review of a visa decision.

Table 2 Change in the number of temporary visa holders in Australia – comparison between 31 December 2023 and 31 December 2024[1]

Visa Category	31/12/2023	31/12/2024	Difference	% Change
Bridging	211,570	342,506	130,936	61.9%
Crew and Transit	29,212	25,127	-4,085	-14.0%
Other Temporary	3,711	3,775	64	1.7%
Special Category	701,868	701,280	-588	-0.1%
Student	547,075	522,183	-24,892	-4.6%
Temporary Protection	10,554	4,481	-6,073	-57.5%
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	356,825	277,730	-79,095	-22.2%
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	130,451	166,830	36,379	27.9%
Visitor	601,051	629,075	28,024	4.7%
Working Holiday Maker	170,437	206,187	35,750	21.0%
Grand Total	**2,762,754**	**2,879,174**	**116,420**	**4.2%**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Figure 4 Number of temporary visa holders in Australia, 31 January 2021 to 31 December 2024



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

44. As of 31 December 2024, there were 2.9 million people in Australia holding a temporary visa, including New Zealand citizens on a Special Category visa, compared to 2.8 million as of 31 December 2023, an increase of 4.2 per cent.

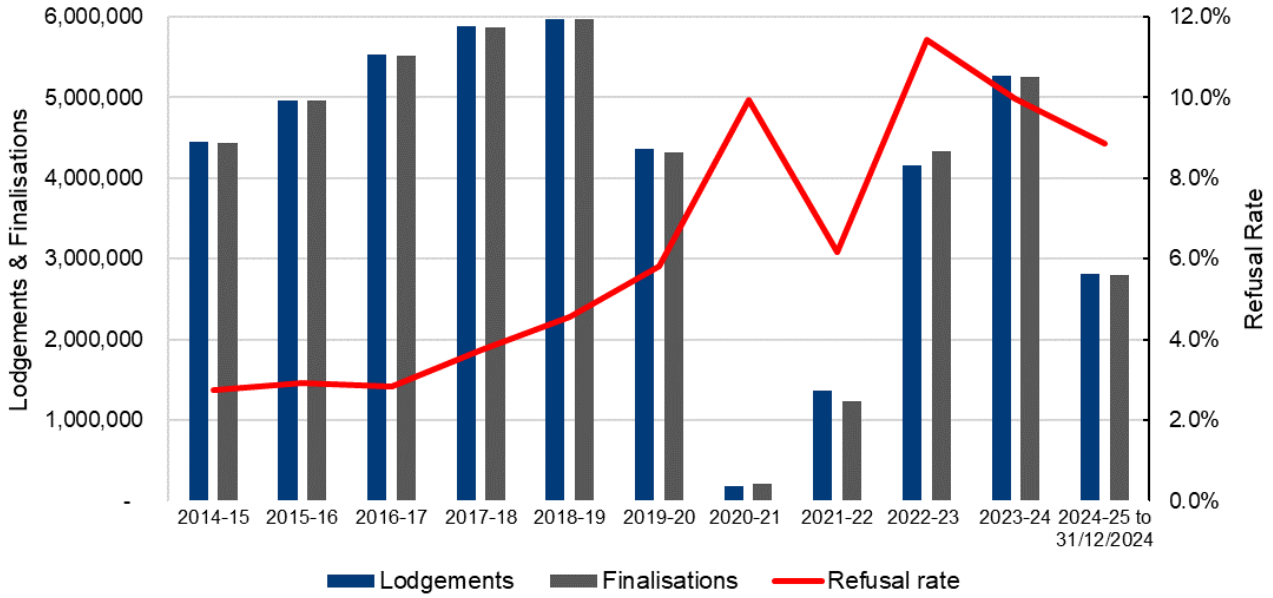
[1] Bridging visa subclass E not included in the Bridging visa category.

45. There have been decreases in international student and pandemic event visa holders in Australia compared with December 2023. These decreases have been offset by increases in temporary skilled and working holiday programs.

Visitor visa

46. The international tourism industry provides substantial economic benefits and generates jobs, investment and growth in communities throughout the country. The Department supports the tourism sector through the efficient processing of Visitor visas, and also through support of the Australian visitor economy through skilled visa programs.
47. On 31 December 2024 there were 629,075 Visitor visa holders in Australia, compared to 601,051 on 31 December 2023, an increase of 4.7 per cent (see Table 2).
48. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, Visitor visa application lodgements increased by 3.1 per cent and finalisations increased by 3.9 per cent compared with the same period in 2023–24. This increase demonstrates the continued steady recovery of the tourism and business markets, however global demand for Visitor visas to travel to Australia has not yet returned to pre-COVID levels as source markets recover at different rates around the world.
49. The rate of refusals in the Visitor visa program continued in 2023-24 at higher levels than before COVID, but is steadily declining. High refusal rates in 2022-23 and 2023-24 to some extent reflected:
    - An increased level of risk in global caseloads due to changes in the socio-economic conditions in some of Australia's largest source countries, including due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and a reduction in the quality of visa applications lodged; and
    - Improved integrity measures implemented by the Department to detect and prevent widespread fraud and prevent adverse outcomes, such as illegal work and visa non-compliance.
50. The refusal rate has been declining slowly since 2023–24, which reflects a greater proportion of genuine applicants applying for a Visitor visa to visit Australia for legitimate reasons.
51. The Australian Immi App was released 26 September 2024 with an initial roll-out across the Pacific for visa applicants located in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and third country nationals located in New Zealand. The app provides facial biometric capture and verification capability allowing visa applicants to self-serve rather than traveling to a biometrics collection centre.
    - The initial release in the Pacific is part of the Australian Government's commitment to improve connectivity, support economic development, and build a strong and secure Pacific region.
52. Following the Australian Government's announcement to improve visa access to Australia for ASEAN during the Special ASEAN-Australia Summit in March 2024, the Department implemented:
    - An extended Business Visitor visa product (up to five years validity) on 1 April 2024, not including Myanmar.
    - The Visitor visa Frequent Traveller Stream was rolled out on 7 December 2024 to eligible passport-holders from ASEAN Member States (excluding Myanmar) and Timor-Leste. This product provides up to ten years validity to travel to Australia for both business and leisure purposes.
53. These measures reaffirm Australia's commitment to the ASEAN region and Timor-Leste, by improving access and enabling closer economic collaboration, and will complement the Migration Strategy by strengthening international mobility pathways, supporting regional relationships and enhancing community connection between ASEAN and Australia.

Figure 5 Visitor visa program trends, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

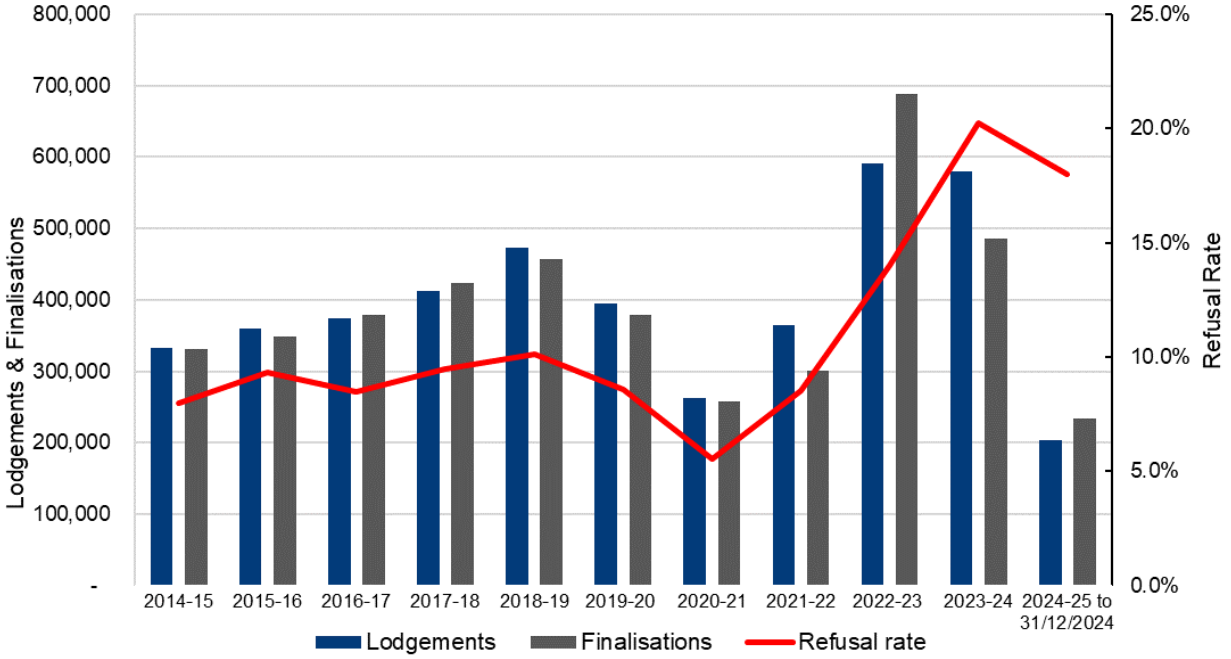
Student Visa

54. In the period immediately after the re-opening of Australia's international borders, there were sharp increases in Student visa applications. Integrity concerns in the student visa program and the international education sector more broadly were outlined in three key government reviews:
    - The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT),
    - The Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System (Nixon Review), and
    - The Review of the Migration System, which led to the release of the Migration Strategy.
55. A series of policy changes have been introduced to address integrity concerns in the student visa program, commencing with the updates to the financial capacity requirement in October 2023. Further changes were introduced as part of Migration Strategy, including:
    - Increased English language requirements;
    - Introduction of a genuine student requirement;
    - Change in methodology to determine the financial capacity requirement;
    - Introduction of Ministerial Direction 107 which prioritised the caseload in line the immigration risk level of the education provider;
    - Restrictions on onshore 'visa hopping';
    - Increased scrutiny across the caseload;
    - Higher refusal rates; and
    - An increase to the Visa Application Charge.
56. These changes have led to demand returning to pre-COVID levels across the Student visa program.
57. On 19 December 2024, the Government revoked Ministerial Direction 107 and implemented *Ministerial Direction 111 (MD111) Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications*. MD111 sets out priorities for the order of student visa processing in the offshore visa caseload.

58. On 1 January 2025, the Department implemented a change to validity requirements for Student Visa applications made in Australia relating to evidence of intended course of study. Onshore Student visa applicants will now be required to provide a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) at the time of application which is consistent with the requirement for those applying from outside Australia.

59. The Department has prioritised offshore student visa applications through a period of extensive change and growth in the program to ensure that genuine students are able to arrive in Australia and commence their studies. Those students who are onshore are generally able to commence their courses while holding a Bridging visa. The Department has commenced work to reduce on hand onshore Student visa applications as the offshore application rate has decreased.

Figure 6 Student Visa program trends, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Student Visa activity summary for Program Year (PY) 2024–25 to 31 December 2024

60. Student Visa applications lodged decreased from 282,312 in 2023-24 to 31 December to 203,682 in the same period in 2024-25, or 27.9 per cent.

61. The Department finalised 234,142 Student Visa applications, a decrease of 4.9 per cent compared with 246,290 applications during the same period in 2023–24.

62. The refusal rate of all Student Visa applications was 18.0 per cent compared with 18.9 per cent during the same period in 2023–24.

Table 3 Change in the number of Student Visa applications lodged by sector comparison between 2022–23 and 2023–24, plus current year to date 2024–25

Visa Type	2022–23	2023–24	Difference	% Change	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
Foreign Affairs or Defence	4,465	4,813	348	7.8%	2,882
Higher Education	312,766	310,840	-1,926	-0.6%	120,066
Independent ELICOS	70,970	55,417	-15,553	-21.9%	15,892
Non-Award	17,123	18,006	883	5.2%	8,164
Postgraduate Research	14,433	14,207	-226	-1.6%	7,038
Schools	11,087	12,528	1,441	13.0%	4,850
Vocational Education and Training	159,460	164,382	4,922	3.1%	44,790
Total	**590,304**	**580,193**	**-10,111**	**-1.7%**	**203,682**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

63. Of the 203,682 Student Visa applications lodged in PY 2024–25 to 31 December 2024:

- 120,066 applications were lodged in the Higher Education sector, a decrease of 20.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2023–24 (151,103 applications lodged);
- 44,790 applications were lodged in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, a decrease of 42.0 per cent compared with the same period in 2023–24 (77,226 applications lodged).
- 15,892 applications were lodged in the Independent English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector, a decrease of 46.0 per cent compared to the same period in 2023–24 (29,449 applications lodged).

Table 4 Number of Student Visa holders in Australia, quarterly from 30 September 2022 to 31 December 2024

Sector (Visa Type)	30-Sep-22	31-Dec-22	31-Mar-23	30-Jun-23	30-Sep-23	31-Dec-23	31-Mar-24	30-Jun-24	30-Sep-24	31-Dec-24
Foreign Affairs or Defence	2,442	1,979	3,375	3,348	3,641	2,458	3,885	3,837	3,487	2,156
Higher Education	236,674	234,380	331,431	310,389	389,846	301,825	416,095	368,601	434,291	322,665
Independent ELICOS	24,922	35,370	41,629	40,069	39,890	38,525	32,960	26,613	22,827	18,778
Non-Award	7,792	3,263	9,075	4,174	8,530	3,469	8,539	3,934	9,017	3154
Postgraduate Research	23,138	22,816	26,397	26,738	27,735	23,451	28,566	28,091	29,440	24,786
Schools	10,689	7,104	11,291	10,130	14,114	7,777	14,812	12,793	16,340	8,225
Vocational Education and Training	113,657	152,047	159,549	173,894	180,411	169,559	166,491	164,382	159,310	142,408
Total	**419,314**	**456,959**	**582,747**	**568,742**	**664,167**	**547,064**	**671,348**	**608,251**	**674,712**	**522,172**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

64. On 31 December 2024, there were 522,183 Student Visa holders in Australia, a 4.6% decrease from 31 December 2023.

65. The number of Student Visa holders in Australia data in Table 4 represents Student Visa holders in Australia on the snapshot date and not a monthly aggregate or average.

66. A range of matters impact the number of Student Visa holders in Australia. This includes course commencement and end dates, where many international students return home during semester breaks, or new students remain offshore prior to travelling to Australia to commence their studies. Changes can also be a result of Student Visa holders moving on to another visa type such as a bridging visa, or another substantive visa.

Table 5 Offshore Student Visa grant rate by sector from 2019–20 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Sector	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
Foreign Affairs or Defence Sector	99.5%	96.3%	99.0%	99.2%	98.6%	99.4%
Higher Education Sector	89.6%	89.6%	94.4%	83.8%	80.9%	90.7%
Independent ELICOS Sector	91.7%	81.3%	85.0%	90.4%	79.5%	74.7%
Non-Award Sector	99.6%	78.7%	99.4%	99.4%	99.4%	99.6%
Postgraduate Research Sector	97.1%	96.7%	96.7%	96.3%	96.5%	97.7%
Schools Sector	91.4%	96.2%	96.6%	93.5%	89.6%	82.5%
Vocational Education and Training Sector	63.9%	54.9%	68.9%	53.4%	47.4%	50.6%
Grand Total	**87.6%**	**85.5%**	**89.5%**	**80.4%**	**78.3%**	**86.5%**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

67. The grant rate of Student Visa applications lodged outside Australia and decided during the 2024–25 program year to 31 December 2024 was 86.5 per cent.

Temporary Graduate visas

68. The Migration Strategy repositioned the Temporary Graduate visa to support early career professionals develop the relevant work history they will need to progress to a skilled visa or use their education and skills in the global jobs market.

69. Australia's revised post study work rights provide graduates an opportunity to demonstrate their potential and ability to contribute to the Australian economy, but provide clear boundaries so former students do not become 'permanently temporary'.

70. As a result of program reforms and the realignment of stay periods on 1 July 2024, application lodgements decreased by 48.4 per cent in 2024-25 (to 31 December) compared to in the same period in 2023-24.

Working Holiday Makers

71. The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program promotes cultural exchange and boosts people-to-people connections between young adults from Australia and partner countries.

72. WHM application rates have increased as many young people from partner countries take up the opportunity to have a working holiday in Australia, which was not available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

73. 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 that must be satisfied by visa applicants compared to the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa, 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.

74. As of 31 December 2024, Australia has WHM program arrangements with 50 partner countries and regions. This includes 19 Working Holiday (subclass 417) arrangements and 31 Work and Holiday (subclass 462) arrangements. This provides opportunities to travel and undertake short-term work during their holiday.

75. WHMs are not required to work, but may do so for the entire duration of their stay in Australia, in any location, industry or role they choose, usually for up to 6 months with any one employer.

Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa pre-application process

76. The Australian Government introduced a pre-application process (a ballot) for the Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa on 1 October 2024 for applicants from China, India and Vietnam.

77. The introduction of the ballot system aims to provide an equitable, streamlined and transparent method for selecting applicants in cases where the demand is anticipated to significantly exceed the available visa places for a participating country.

78. The ballot closed for registrations in October and November 2024. As at 13 January 2025, a total of 139,633 valid registrations were received across the three countries.

Table 6 Number of registrations received in the WHM ballot, 2024–25 (as at 20 January 2025)

Country	Registration received
India	98,019
China	34,161
Vietnam	7,453
Total	**139,633**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

79. The Department of Home Affairs will conduct random selections from the pool of registered participants until 30 April 2025. Selected registrants will be notified to make an online application for a first Work and Holiday visa.

80. Selected ballot registrants will still need to meet standard Subclass 462 requirements in order to be granted a visa.

Figure 7 Working Holiday Maker visa trends, from 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

81. As at 31 December 2024, there were 206,187 WHM visa holders in Australia compared with 170,437 on 31 December 2023.

82. In the program year to 31 December 2024, the median processing time for Working Holiday (subclass 417) visas was less than one day, and 18 days for the Work and Holiday (Subclass 462) visa.

83. In the program year to 31 December 2024, 175,071 WHM visas have been granted, compared with 122,387 WHM visas granted in the program year to 31 December 2023.

Temporary Resident (Skilled)

84. Temporary Resident (Skilled) visas comprise the Skills in Demand (SID), the Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) and the Temporary Work (subclass 457) visas.
85. On 7 December 2024, the Skills in Demand (SID) (subclass 482) visa replaced the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) (subclass 482) visa.
86. The SID visa program is the primary mechanism to bring temporary skilled workers to Australia.
87. The SID visa provides a streamlined pathway for skilled migrants, promoting worker mobility while offering a simple process for employers to access the skilled workers they need to help their businesses to grow.
88. SID visa holders have a clear pathway to permanent residence, providing certainty to both migrants and employers.
89. The SID visa has three streams:
    - Specialist Skills stream for highly skilled migrants who will bring significant economic benefits to Australia and help drive innovation and job creation.
    - Core Skills stream to meet targeted workforce needs, including filling workforce gaps and providing vital services to the community. Most temporary skilled visa holders will come through this stream.
    - Labour Agreement stream, which will be replaced by an Essential Skills stream (under development).
90. On 3 December 2024, the Government announced the new Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) which applies to the Core Skills stream of the new SID visa. The CSOL fulfils the Government's commitment to replace complex, out of date and inflexible occupation lists in our temporary skilled visa program.
91. The CSOL is a single, consolidated list which provides access to temporary skilled migration for 456 occupations, informed by labour market analysis and stakeholder consultation by Jobs and Skills Australia.
92. The CSOL includes 70 new occupations that were not previously available for the TSS visa, including new occupations in the health, childcare, education, construction and cyber sectors.
93. As at 31 December 2024, processing priorities for Temporary Resident (Skilled) applications are expressed in Ministerial Direction (MD) 105, which came into effect on 15 December 2023 and give priority to applications for Regional Australia, followed by occupations in the healthcare and teaching sectors.
94. Demand remains high for temporary skilled workers in the medical, nursing and age care sectors and for occupations the hospitality sector and chefs continue to be in high demand in regional Australia.

Table 7 Most Frequently granted occupations for Temporary Skill Shortages visa, sorted on current year to date top 15 – comparison between 2022–23 and 2023–24, plus current year to date 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)[2]

Nominated Occupation		2022–23	2023–24	% change from 2022–23	2023–24 as % of Total	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
1	3513 Chefs	2,409	2,279	-5.4%	4.4%	2,279
2	2531 General Practitioners and Resident Medical Officers	2,278	2,906	27.6%	5.6%	1,978
3	3212 Motor Mechanics	2,239	2,820	25.9%	5.4%	1,645
4	2613 Software and Applications Programmers	5,269	3,014	-42.8%	5.8%	1,448
5	2544 Registered Nurses	1,487	1,490	0.2%	2.9%	1,218
6	3223 Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	1,117	1,608	44.0%	3.1%	965
7	1411 Cafe and Restaurant Managers	848	938	10.6%	1.8%	778
8	3514 Cooks	841	670	-20.3%	1.3%	721
9	2611 ICT Business and Systems Analysts	2,499	1,304	-47.8%	2.5%	707
10	3232 Metal Fitters and Machinists	845	1,300	53.8%	2.5%	651
11	2632 ICT Support and Test Engineers	1,180	753	-36.2%	1.4%	640
12	2251 Advertising and Marketing Professionals	1,133	1,048	-7.5%	2.0%	619
13	3125 Mechanical Engineering Draftspersons and Technicians	568	1,064	87.3%	2.0%	603
14	4233 Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers	99	457	361.6%	0.9%	587
15	2211 Accountants	1,355	1,101	-18.7%	2.1%	578
	Other occupation	27,438	29,349	7.0%	56.3%	15,870
	Total	**51,605**	**52,101**	**1.0%**	**100.0%**	**31,287**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

95. The comparative decline of ICT and Accountant related occupations since 2022–23 may be related to the cessation of MD 97 on 28 October 2022, which gave priority to the 44 occupations on the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List, including 262112 ICT security Specialist and 221111 Accountant.

Table 8 Number of Temporary Resident (Skilled) primary visa applications lodged – comparison between 2022–23 and 2023–24, plus year to date 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Visa Category	2022–23	2023–24	Difference	% Change	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	47,116	64,099	16,983	36.0%	45,941

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

96. Application lodgements in the Temporary Resident (Skilled) visa category continue to grow strongly reflecting the demand from Australian employers for overseas skilled workers to fill vacancies.

97. In 2023–24, lodgements by primary visa applicants increased by 36.0 per cent from 2022–23.

98. The 45,941 lodgements in the first half of the 2024–25 program year, equating to 72.0 per cent of all lodgements for 2023–24, demonstrates this high level of demand for skilled overseas workers continues.

[2] Table 8 data excludes visa subclass 457. Note, Skills in Demand visa included from 7 December.

Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement

99. 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 where appropriately qualified Australian workers cannot be found and standard work visa programs are not available.

100. The Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement has been designed featuring concessions and flexibility to standard visa requirements to help support the aged care sector and improve the attraction and retention of skilled overseas workers.

101. The uptake of the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement continues to increase among providers and overseas direct care workers.

102. As at 10 January 2025, there were 113 Aged Care Industry Labour Agreements in effect, which can provide for more than 29,000 direct care workers, depending on the demand from business.

103. As at 10 January 2025, the Department granted 2,649 visas under the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement.

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

104. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is a temporary migration program which allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from nine Pacific Island countries, 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.

105. 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.

106. The PALM scheme is demand driven and open to eligible employers in all sectors in rural and regional Australia, primarily addressing workforce needs in key sectors in rural and regional Australia.

107. Agriculture, hospitality, tourism, and the care sectors have growing opportunities for Pacific Island and Timor-Leste citizens.

108. The employer must be approved by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to participate in the PALM scheme. The role of the Department is to assess applications from Australian employers for a Temporary Activities Sponsorship and visa applications from workers.

PALM Family Accompaniment Vietnam Arrangements Pilot

109. The PALM Family Accompaniment Pilot, which commenced on 25 March 2024, aims to address the social impacts of long periods of family separation and build deeper connections with Pacific and Timor-Leste countries.

110. The Pilot will permit eligible PALM scheme workers on long-term placements of between one and four years to bring their immediate family to Australia, subject to agreement of their employer sponsor.

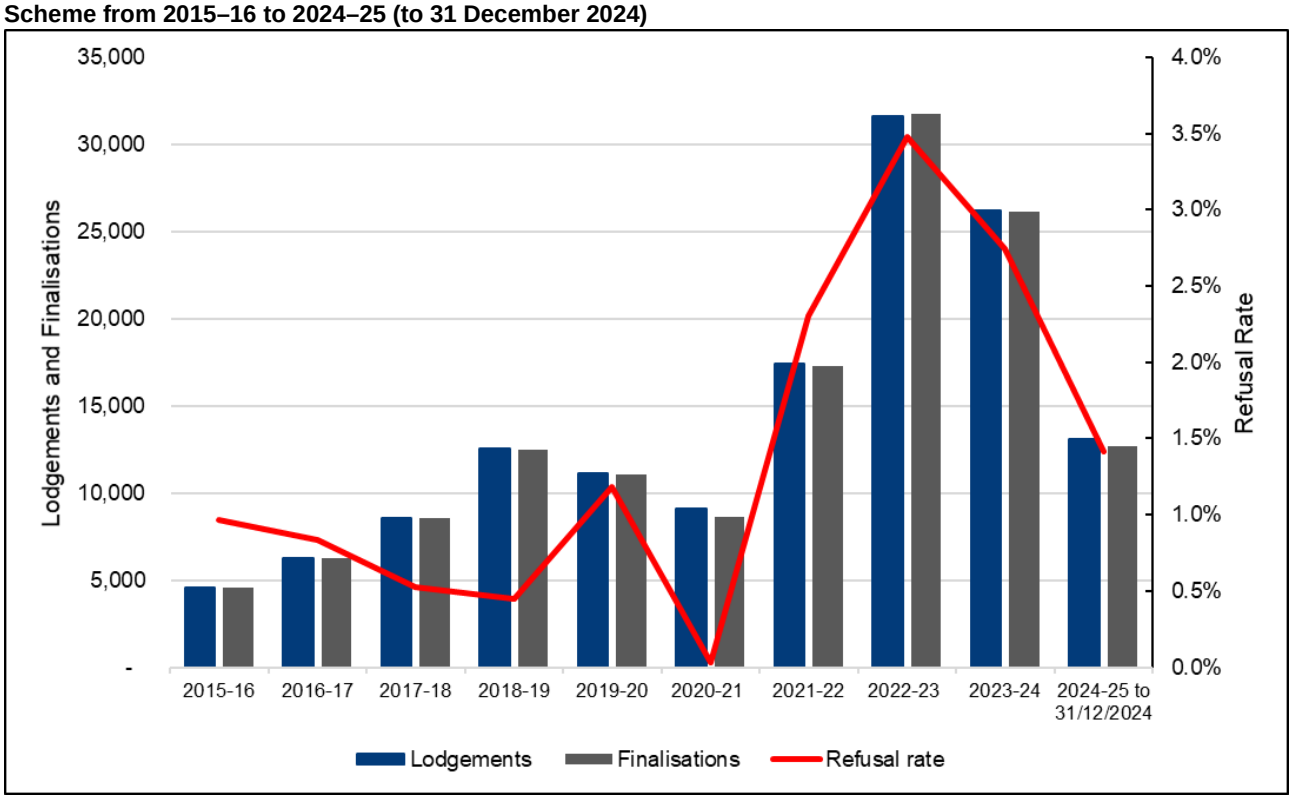
111. The PALM Family Accompaniment measure has commenced with a staged rollout to test policy and program settings, commencing with a pilot of 200 families nominated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Table 9 Number of PALM scheme visa grants[3] – comparison between 2022–23 and 2023–24, plus year to date 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Citizenship Country	2022–23	2023–24	Difference	% Change	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
Fiji	3,984	2,496	-1,488	-37.3%	544
Kiribati	1,037	976	-61	-5.9%	438
Nauru	5	34	29	580.0%	27
Papua New Guinea	1,220	1,131	-89	-7.3%	454
Samoa	2,586	2,016	-570	-22.0%	1,109
Solomon Islands	2,766	2,418	-348	-12.6%	1,433
Timor-Leste	4,746	3,702	-1,044	-22.0%	1,901
Tonga	4,532	3,526	-1,006	-22.2%	1,695
Tuvalu	77	229	152	197.4%	63
Vanuatu	9,471	8,720	-751	-7.9%	4,767
Total	**30,424**	**25,248**	**-5,176**	**-17.0%**	**12,431**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Figure 8 Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme including Seasonal Worker Program and Pacific Labour Scheme from 2015–16 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

112. As at 31 December 2024, there were 27,248 combined Seasonal Worker Program, Pacific Labour Scheme and PALM (subclass 403) visa holders in Australia. This is 1.3 per cent less than the number of visa holders (27,605) from the same time last year on 31 December 2023.

[3] including Seasonal Worker Program and Pacific Labour Scheme

Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme

113. The Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES) is a new temporary mobility pathway for Indian graduates and early career professionals with knowledge and skills in targeted fields of study to live and work in Australia for up to two years.

114. Targeted fields of study include renewable energy, mining, engineering, information and communications technology, artificial intelligence, financial technology and agricultural technology.

115. MATES was established under the Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA), a bilateral framework entered into between the governments of Australia and India on 23 May 2023. The MMPA will see both countries benefit from enhanced cooperation on migration issues.

116. The program presents an opportunity for the mutually beneficial skills and knowledge transfer between Australia and India in the sectors of identified demand, by enabling young Indian professionals with targeted qualifications to expand their skills and experience in Australia.

117. Up to 3,000 temporary visa places are available for primary applicants per program year, which will be allocated through a visa pre-application (ballot) process. Primary applicants will be able to bring dependents, who will not be counted towards the 3,000 places.

118. The first MATES ballot opened on 9 December 2024 and closed on 7 January 2025, with 6,656 valid registrations received.

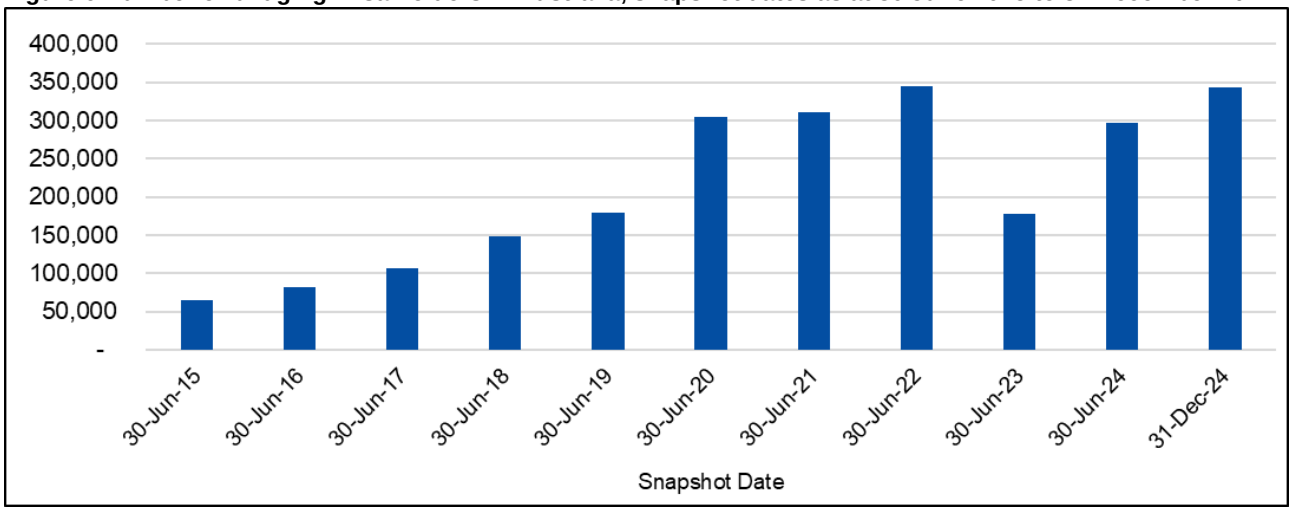
119. The first ballot selections took place on 8 January 2025. Successful ballot candidates are eligible to apply for a Temporary Work (International Relations) (subclass 403) visa in the MATES stream 30 days from the date of ballot selection.

Bridging visas

120. On 31 December 2024 there were 342,077 Bridging A, B and C visa (BV ABC) holders in Australia. The majority of BV ABC visas granted are associated with a substantive visa application, with most people on these visas having applied for a new visa while they were holding a substantive visa.

121. The number of people holding an in-effect BV ABC in Australia varies throughout the year with annual seasonal peaks and troughs, in line with variances in other visa programs.

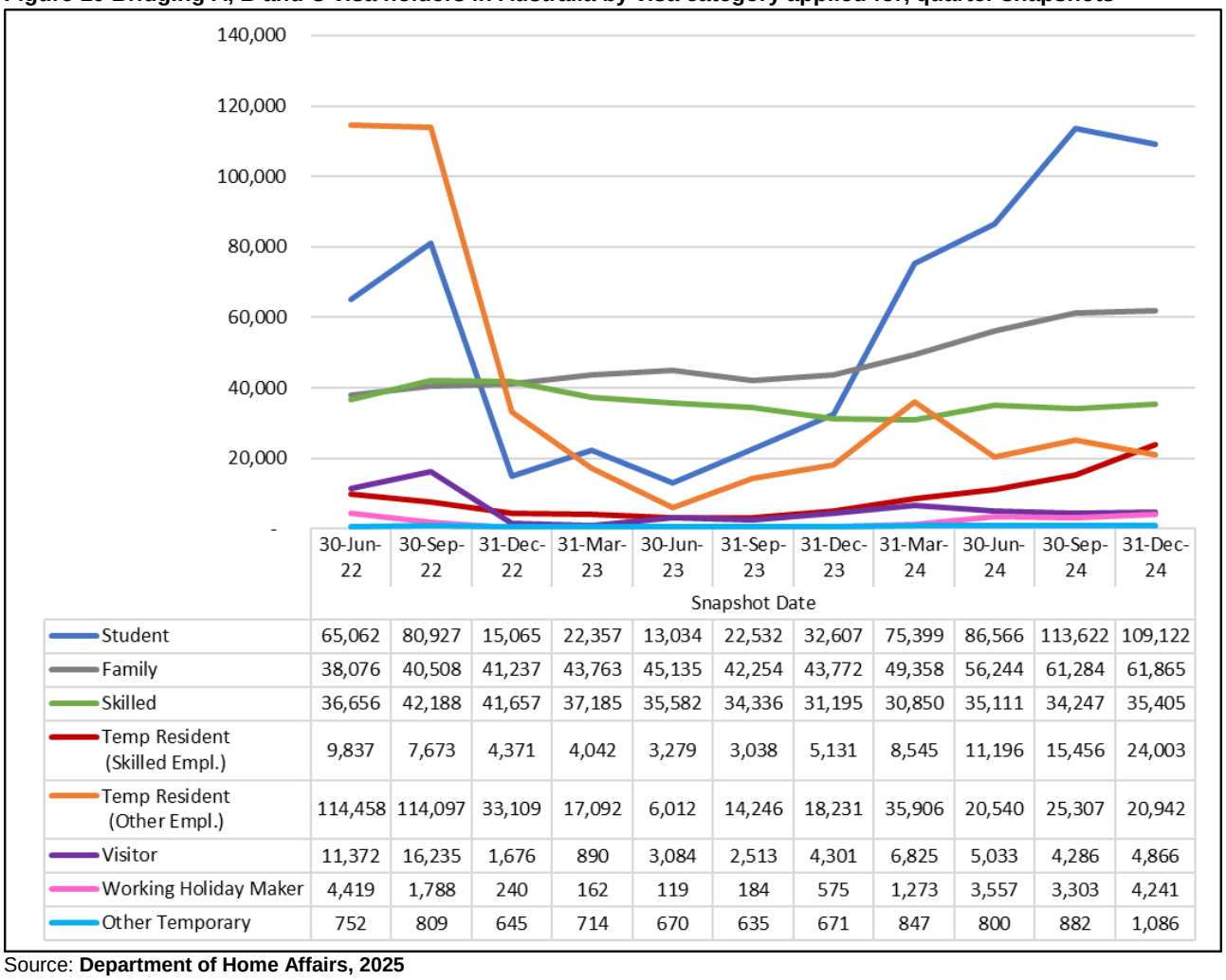
Figure 9 Number of bridging[4] visa holders in Australia, snapshot dates as at 30 June 2015 to 31 December 2024



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

[4] *Excludes Bridging Visa E (subclass 050 and 051) holders, includes applicants for permanent and temporary visas where bridging visa has been granted*

Figure 10 Bridging A, B and C visa holders in Australia by visa category applied for, quarter snapshots[5]



	30-Jun-22	30-Sep-22	31-Dec-22	31-Mar-23	30-Jun-23	31-Sep-23	31-Dec-23	31-Mar-24	30-Jun-24	30-Sep-24	31-Dec-24
	Snapshot Date										
Student	65,062	80,927	15,065	22,357	13,034	22,532	32,607	75,399	86,566	113,622	109,122
Family	38,076	40,508	41,237	43,763	45,135	42,254	43,772	49,358	56,244	61,284	61,865
Skilled	36,656	42,188	41,657	37,185	35,582	34,336	31,195	30,850	35,111	34,247	35,405
Temp Resident (Skilled Empl.)	9,837	7,673	4,371	4,042	3,279	3,038	5,131	8,545	11,196	15,456	24,003
Temp Resident (Other Empl.)	114,458	114,097	33,109	17,092	6,012	14,246	18,231	35,906	20,540	25,307	20,942
Visitor	11,372	16,235	1,676	890	3,084	2,513	4,301	6,825	5,033	4,286	4,866
Working Holiday Maker	4,419	1,788	240	162	119	184	575	1,273	3,557	3,303	4,241
Other Temporary	752	809	645	714	670	635	671	847	800	882	1,086

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

122. On 31 December 2024, the number of people in Australia holding an in-effect BV ABC had increased 61.9 per cent from the same time the previous year on 31 December 2023. The most recent increases to the number of BV ABC holders in Australia can be attributed to growth in application volumes for Student Visas, Skills in Demand visas, Partner visas and Employer Nomination Scheme visas.

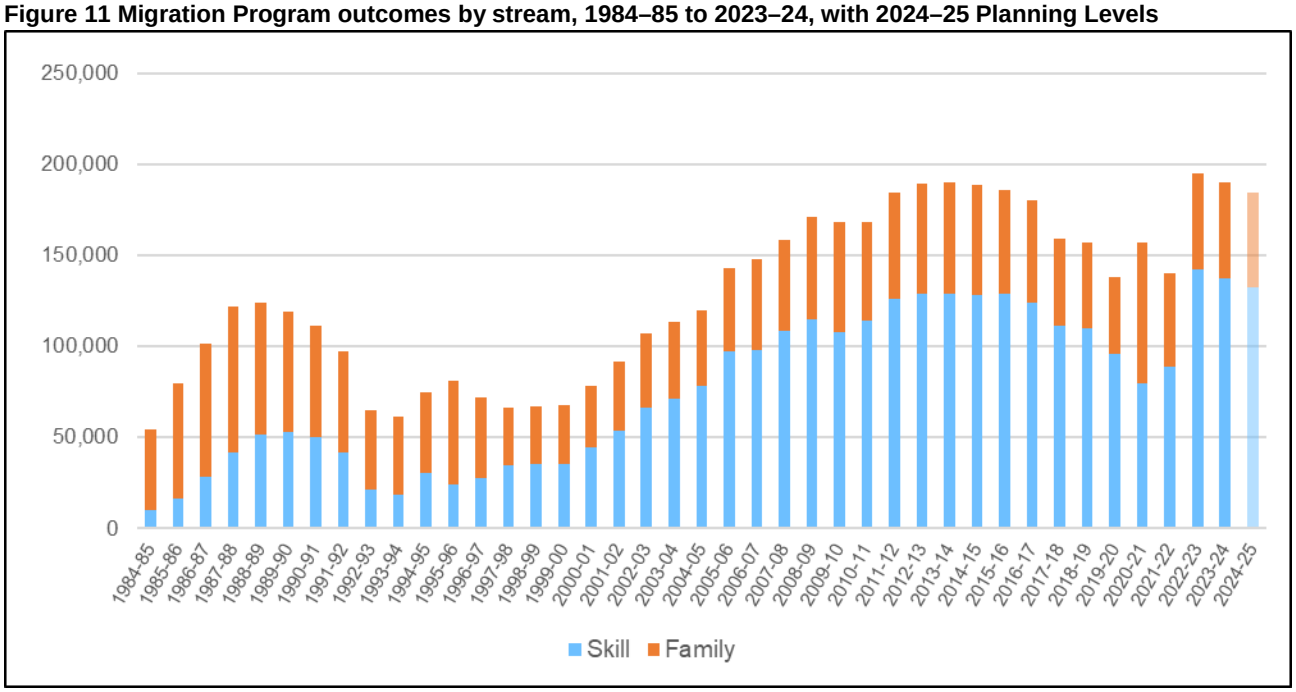
Migration Program

123. Australia's permanent Migration Program (Migration Program) is designed to meet Australia's ongoing economic, demographic and community needs. It focuses on attracting people that will address current and emerging skills shortages, reuniting families while also recognising migrants' contribution to social cohesion and community bonds.

124. The 2024–25 Migration Program planning levels were informed by consultation with state and territory governments, academia, industry, unions and community organisations.

[5] Note: Temporary Resident (Other Employment) includes Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visas and Temporary Activity (subclass 408) COVID-19 Pandemic Event visas

Figure 11 Migration Program outcomes by stream, 1984–85 to 2023–24, with 2024–25 Planning Levels



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

125. The Migration Program is composed of three streams: Skilled, Family and Special Eligibility.

126. The 2024–25 Migration Program has been set at 185,000 places, with the following composition:

- Skilled stream (132,200 places, approximately 71.0 per cent of the program) – this stream has been designed to improve the productive capacity of the economy and fill skill shortages in the labour market, particularly those in regional Australia.
- Family stream (52,500 places, approximately 28.0 per cent of the program) – this stream is predominantly made up of partner visas, enabling Australians to reunite with family members from overseas and provide them with pathways to citizenship.
- Special Eligibility stream (300 places) – this stream covers visas for those in special circumstances, including permanent residents returning to Australia after a period overseas.

127. Around 60.0 per cent of visas under the Migration Program are granted to migrants already onshore and in the community, residing in established households at the time of visa grant.

Table 10 Migration Program planning levels and program outcomes, 2021–22 (outcomes only) to 2024–25

Category	2021–22 Program Outcomes	2022–23 Planning Levels	2022–23 Program Outcomes	2023–24 Planning levels	2023–24 Program Outcomes	2024–25 Planning levels
Employer Sponsored	26,103	35,000	35,000	36,825	36,825	44,000
Skilled Independent	5,864	32,100	32,100	30,375	30,375	16,900
Skilled Regional	18,223	34,000	33,944	32,300	32,300	33,000
State/Territory Nominated	19,376	31,000	31,000	30,400	30,400	33,000
Business Innovation and Investment Program	10,496	5,000	5,000	1,900	1,900	1,000
Global Talent	8,776	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	4,000
Distinguished Talent	225	300	300	300	300	300
Skill total	**89,063**	**142,400**	**142,344**	**137,100**	**137,100**	**132,200**
Partner[6]	46,288	40,500	40,500	40,500	40,720	40,500
Parent	4,500	8,500	8,500	8,500	8,500	8,500
Other Family	500	500	500	500	500	500
Child[7,8]	N/A	3,000	3,000	3000	3000	3,000
Family total	**51,288**	**52,500**	**52,500**	**52,500**	**52,720**	**52,500**
Special Eligibility	199	100	160	400	180	300
Total Migration Program	**140,550**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Child	3,006	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Migration Program	**143,556**	**195,000**	**195,004**	**190,000**	**190,000**	**185,000**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

128. This approach also better aligns investments by federal, state and territory governments in infrastructure, service delivery and housing to support strong settlement outcomes.

129. The Department fully delivered the 2023–24 Migration Program against the overall planning level of 190,000 places. The breakdown for each of the streams within the Migration Program was as follows:

- 137,100 places were delivered in the Skilled stream;
- 52,720 places were delivered in the Family stream; and
- 180 places were delivered in the Special Eligibility stream.

[6] Delivery of the Partner category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only. In 2023–24, the Partner category delivered an extra 220 places which were left over from the planning level allocation for the Special Eligibility category, as agreed by the Minister.

[7] Delivery of the Child category is demand driven, with indicative planning levels only.

[8] From 2022–23, the Child category became part of the Family stream.

Table 11 Migration Program - Top 10 countries of citizenship, 2018–19 to 2023–24

Outcome[9,10]	Program Year					
Citizenship Country	**2018–19**	**2019–20**	**2020–21**	**2021–22**	**2022–23**	**2023–24**
India	33,611	25,698	21,791	24,324	41,145	**49,848**
China, Peoples Republic of (excl. SARs)	24,282	18,587	22,207	18,240	23,936	**21,806**
Philippines	9,159	8,965	11,058	8,591	13,085	**11,942**
Nepal	4,096	5,048	4,714	6,628	12,041	**11,506**
United Kingdom	13,689	10,681	12,703	9,584	11,439	**9,916**
Pakistan	4,739	4,136	4,121	3,734	4,927	**6,877**
Vietnam	5,532	5,398	8,120	6,492	6,571	**6,698**
Sri Lanka	2,716	2,609	2,237	2,801	4,482	**5,672**
Afghanistan	2,078	2,279	1,412	1,773	2,543	**5,556**
South Africa	3,861	3,743	3,523	3,305	5,434	**4,620**
Other	56,560	53,222	68,166	58,084	69,401	**55,559**
Total	**160,323**	**140,366**	**160,052**	**143,556**	**195,004**	**190,000**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Skilled Migration Program

130. The Skilled stream of the Migration Program is designed to attract migrants who make a significant contribution to the Australian economy, and fill positions where no Australian workers are available. Skilled migrants have very high participation rates in the workforce, helping to stimulate economic growth, which results in more jobs.

131. The Skilled stream also plays an important role in regional development through providing skills and labour which can't be sourced locally, as well as encouraging investment and promoting local spending in regional areas.

132. On 7 December 2024, the National Innovation visa replaced the Global Talent visa, which is now closed to new applications. The Department will continue to process on-hand Global Talent visa applications in accordance with processing priorities and annual migration planning levels.

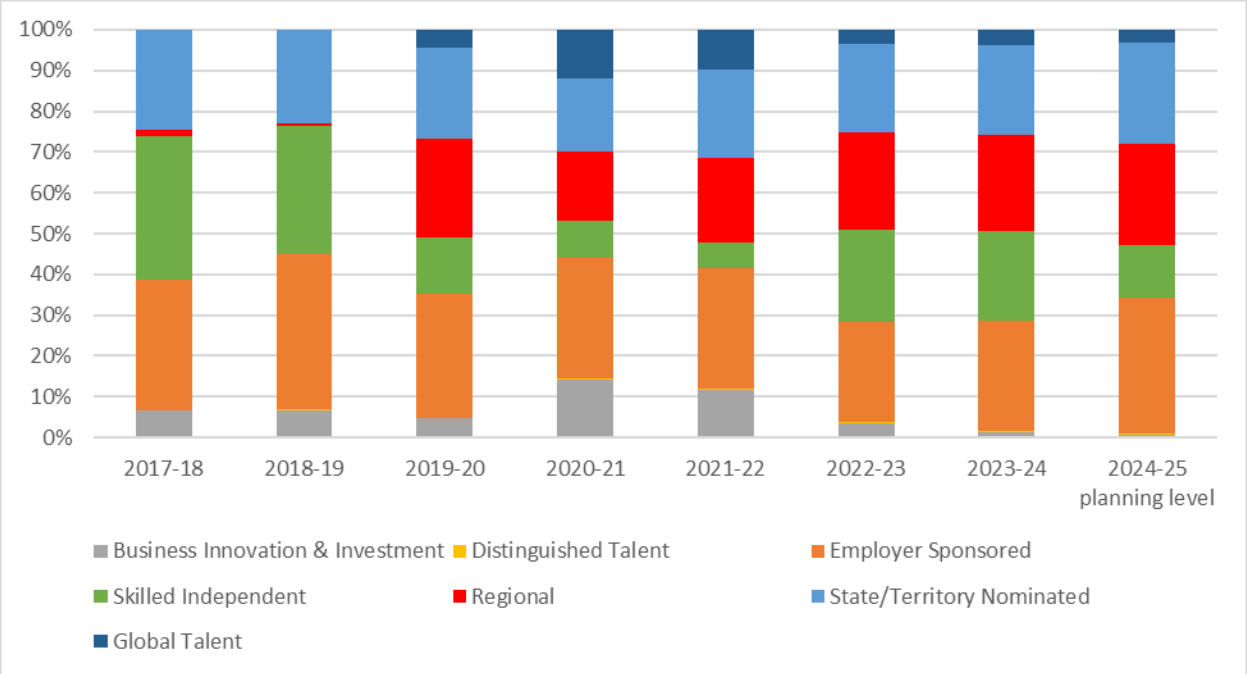
133. The Skilled stream includes the following visa categories:

- General skilled migration, where skilled workers who do not have an employer sponsoring them, but possess desirable skills, attributes and human capital, and who are able to pass the points test. This category includes the skilled independent and state and territory nominated visas and applied for through an EOI process using the Department's SkillSelect system
- 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.
- Innovation visas aimed at exceptionally talented migrants who are ready to make a significant contribution to a range of nationally important sectors.

[9] Top 10 based on 2023–24 outcomes.

[10] Includes primary and secondary applicants.

Figure 12 Skilled Migration Program composition of the Skilled Migration Program outcomes, 2017–18 to 2024–25 planning levels



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

134. The 2023–24 Skilled stream outcome was 137,100 places, which accounted for 72.2 per cent of the total 2023–24 Migration Program outcome. The Government has set the 2024–25 planning level for the skilled stream at 132,200 places.

135. Skilled visa applications are processed according to Government policy priorities. The current ministerial direction (Ministerial Direction 105), which came into effect on 15 December 2023, recognises the need to support regional Australia. The Ministerial Direction elevates applications for employer sponsored visas in relation to occupations to be carried out in regional Australia to the highest priority. For the Migration Program, this applies to employer sponsored Temporary Skills Shortage (subclass 482), Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) and Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) (subclass 494) visas. Ministerial Direction 105 also prioritises applications for occupations in the healthcare and teaching sectors.

Table 12 Number of applications lodged for provisional/permanent Skilled visas, dates 2021–22 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)[11]

Visa Type	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
Employer Sponsored	34,980	41,992	49,094	28,875
Skilled Independent	7,512	49,109	11,063	17,150
State/territory nominated	25,578	61,186	20,097	10,205
Business Innovation & Investment	14,156	8,384	3,951	3,014
Distinguished Talent	336	400	602	1,740
Global Talent	8,698	7,159	6,228	1,001
Grand total	**91,260**	**168,230**	**91,035**	**61,985**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

[11] Table 13 data includes first and second stage visas.

136. The number of Skilled visa lodgements (except for the Regional category) increased by 84.3 per cent from 91,260 in 2021–22 to 168,230 in 2022–23. This was driven by large increases in the 2022–23 planning levels for the Skilled Independent and State/Territory nominated categories. Lodgements in these categories are controlled by the Department, through nomination allocations (State and Territory Nominated) and invitation rounds (Skilled Independent category).

137. In the period to 31 December 2024, the number of Skilled Independent lodgements have already increased by 55.0 per cent compared to lodgements in 2023–24. This is driven by two invitation rounds run by the Department in the first half of 2024–25.

Regional Migration

138. Migration to regional Australia assists in building stronger communities, meeting critical workforce and skills needs and supports economic prosperity in regional Australia:

- The Regional visa category of the 2024–25 Migration Program Skilled stream has increased from 2023–24 levels from 32,300 to 33,000 visas.
- In the Migration Program year to 31 December 2024, more than 16,000 regional visa applications have been lodged. The regional migration program is on track to be delivered in full.

Table 13 Number of applications lodged for Regional visas, dates 2021–22 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)[12]

Visa Subclass	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
187 Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme	1,634	514	172	68
191 Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional)	131	1,168	10,594	7,019
489 Skilled - Regional (Provisional)	372	333	174	51
491 Skilled Work Regional (Provisional)	26,314	47,814	17,685	6,007
494 Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional)	3,165	3,752	4,357	2,812
887 Skilled – Regional	10,886	2,076	2,755	714
Grand Total	**42,502**	**55,657**	**35,737**	**16,671**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

139. The Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) subclass 191 visa in the Regional Provisional Stream commenced on 16 November 2022. This visa provides an independent permanent residence pathway for subclass 491 and subclass 494 holders.

- More than 7,000 visa applications have been lodged in the period 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024. This is approximately 38.8 per cent more than in the same period the previous year as a greater number of eligible subclass 491 and subclass 494 visa applicants meet the three year regional residency and other requirements to apply for permanent residence.

[12] Table 14 data includes first and second stage visas.

Table 14 Number of applications finalised for Regional visas, dates 2021–22 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Visa Subclass	Outcome	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25 to 31/12/2024
187 Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme	Granted	1,797	3,275	979	138
	Refused and withdrawn	240	391	103	29
187 Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme Total		**2,037**	**3,666**	**1,082**	***167***
489 Skilled - Regional (Provisional)	Granted	1,156	3,487	1,067	127
	Refused and withdrawn	112	423	209	19
489 Skilled - Regional (Provisional) Total		**1,268**	**3,910**	**1,276**	***146***
491 Skilled Work Regional (Provisional)	Granted	13,898	23,129	26,312	17,925
	Refused and withdrawn	912	5,061	1,447	823
491 Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) Total		**14,810**	**28,190**	**27,759**	***18,748***
494 Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional)	Granted	1,348	3,793	3,683	2,089
	Refused and withdrawn	177	578	485	219
494 Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) Total		**1,525**	**4,371**	**4,168**	***2,308***
887 Skilled – Regional	Granted	2,070	19,655	2,320	801
	Refused and withdrawn	118	219	89	25
887 Skilled - Regional Total		**2,188**	**19,874**	**2,409**	***826***
191 Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional)	Granted	<50	<235	6,024	1,733
	Refused and withdrawn	<5	<5	25	23
191 Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) Total		**47**	**235**	**6,049**	***1,756***
Grand Total		**21,875**	**60,246**	**42,743**	**23,951**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Employer Sponsorship

140. On 7 December 2024, changes were made to the Temporary Residence Transition (TRT) and Direct Entry (DE) streams of the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) (subclass 186) visa. These reforms deliver on the Government's commitment to offer clearer pathways to permanent residence, as outlined in the Migration Strategy.

141. The Migration Strategy outlined a commitment to modernise the accreditation pathway to better compete for talent and to strengthen integrity in the approved sponsor application process.

142. Key reforms include:

- Employers are able to nominate Skills in Demand (SID) visa holders, regardless of stream, for the TRT stream of the ENS.
- All sponsored full-time employment completed while holding a subclass 457, 482 or eligible bridging visa in the three years prior to application counts towards the two year work experience requirement in the TRT stream.
- The Core Skills Income Threshold replaced the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold for both streams of the ENS and will be indexed annually to ensure the minimum salary requirement for the ENS keeps in step with the salary requirement for the SID visa.
- The Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) replaced the Medium and Long Term Strategic Skills List as the occupation list for the DE stream.

143. Key measures introduced on 7 December 2024 include:

- A new accredited sponsor pathway for start-ups operating in a STEM-based field which have received venture capital funding from a registered Early Stage Venture Capital Limited Partnership fund. This new pathway will further help approved sponsors gain streamlined access to the highly-skilled migrant workers they need, while driving innovation and productivity, particularly in emerging industries.
- Updated accredited sponsor criteria which requires sponsors to comply with accreditation characteristics and sponsorship obligations to retain their accredited status. This is to ensure that only high quality, low risk sponsors are granted accredited status and its associated benefits.

Designated Area Migration Agreements

144. Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs) provide employers with access to skilled and semi-skilled workers in occupations not available in the standard skilled migration program. They contain a range of alternative requirements, including concessions, to the standard program which incentivise overseas workers to seek employment in regional areas.

145. As at 31 December 2024 there were thirteen DAMAs in effect, including:

- Northern Territory (NT), Far North Queensland (FNQ), Townsville (North Qld), Pilbara (WA), Kimberley (WA), The South West (WA), Goldfields (WA), Great South Coast (Vic), Goulburn Valley (Vic), Orana (NSW), South Australia Regional, Adelaide City and South West (SA) region, and the new Western Australia state DAMA.

146. WA is the third jurisdiction to establish a state-led approach to DAMA, following NT and SA.

147. DAMAs continue to make up the highest percentage of labour agreements, with over 54.0 per cent of labour agreements being governed by a DAMA head agreement.

Business Innovation and Investment Program

148. The Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP) closed to new applications on 31 July 2024.

149. Refunds of the Visa Application Charge (VAC) are available for subclass 188 visa applicants who withdraw their application on or after 31 July 2024.

National Innovation Visa

150. As part of the Migration Strategy, the Australian Government announced on 11 December 2023, the introduction of a National Innovation Visa (NIV) to drive productivity growth in sectors of national importance that will benefit Australia's future prosperity.

151. The NIV was introduced on 7 December 2024 and replaces the former Global Talent visa (Subclass 858). The NIV is a small, exclusive visa for highly talented migrants who can make significant contributions in sectors of national importance.

152. The NIV is supported by a new priority processing framework that sets the order for the Department to consider visa applications. Invitations and applications are processed in the following priority order:

- **Priority one**: exceptional candidates from any sector who are global experts and recipients of international 'top of field' level awards.
- **Priority two**: exceptional candidates from any sector nominated by an expert Australian Commonwealth, State or Territory Government agency.
- **Priority three**: exceptional candidates in Critical Technologies, Renewables and Low Emission Technologies and Health Industries.
- **Priority four**: exceptional candidates in Agri-food and AgTech, Defence Capabilities and Space, Education, Financial Services and FinTech, Infrastructure and Transport and Resources.

153. The NIV is a permanent residence visa and is only available by invitation through an Expression of Interest (EOI).

Family Program

154. 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.

155. The permanent Family Migration Program is comprised of four categories, including:

- 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; and,
- The Child category, includes Child, Adoption and Orphan Relative visas, enabling children to be sponsored by a parent (or an eligible relative in the case of orphaned relatives).

Family Migration: Capping and queuing and order of processing of applications

156. Parent and Other Family programs are capped in a legislative instrument. 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. 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 next program year.

157. 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 which 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.

158. 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 prioritise processing accordingly.

159. 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.

160. 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

161. The Partner category continues to make up the majority of Australia's Family Migration Program.

162. First stage Partner visa finalisations have been an area of focus for the Department for the first half of program year 2024–25.

163. Partner visa application lodgements have increased 16.9 per cent in 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, compared to the corresponding period in 2023–24.

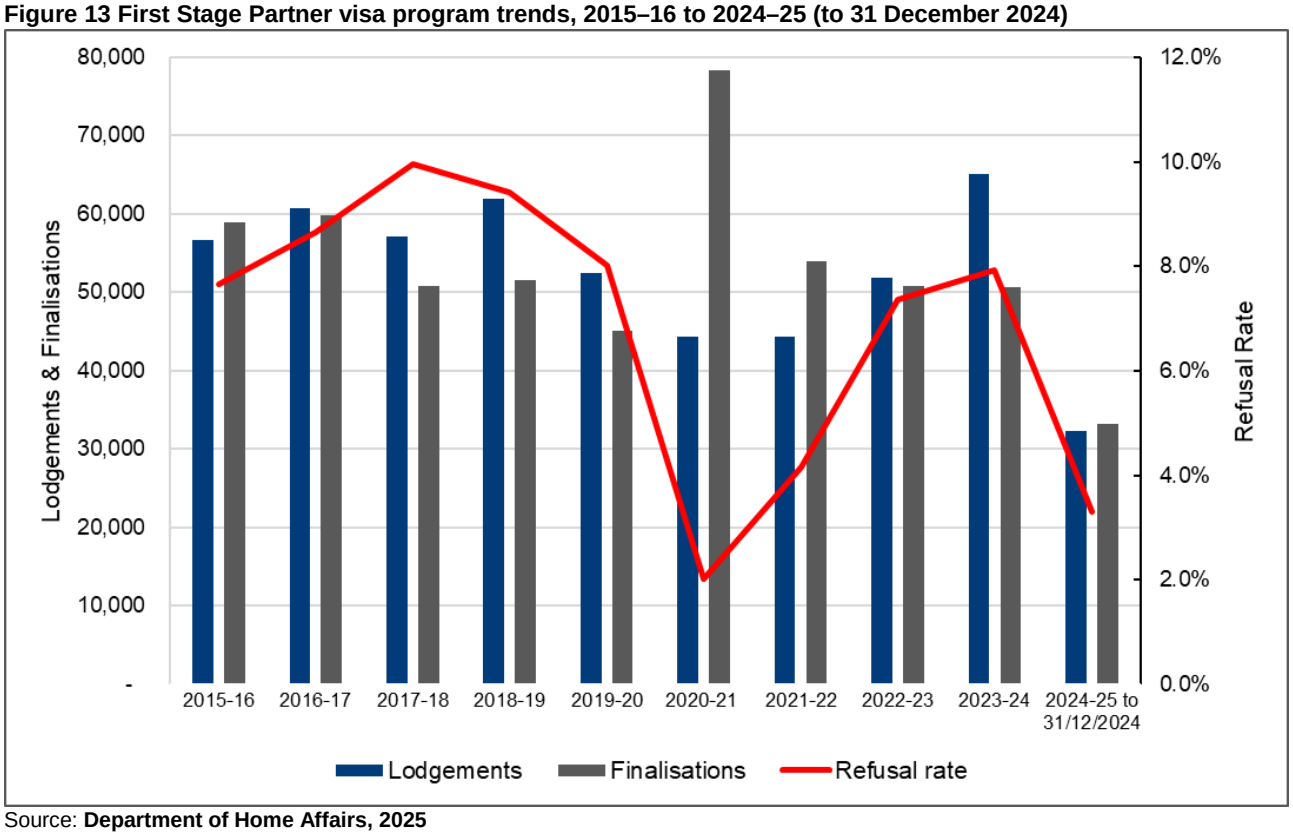
164. As at 31 December 2024, 31,351 first stage Partner visas have been granted, up from 31,292 during the corresponding period in 2023–24. There are 75,010 first stage Partner visa applications remaining on hand, down slightly from 75,060 as at 30 June 2024.

165. The first stage Partner visa processing time at the 75th percentile in 2024–25 to 31 December 2024 was 15 months. This is down from a processing time for program year 2023–24 of 18 months.

166. The Department has continued to prioritise aged and complex Partner visa applications in 2024–25.

167. There has been a significant reduction in the number of on-hand cases aged 24 months or older. As at 31 December 2024, 3,958 (5.3 per cent) of the first stage Partner visa applications on hand were 24 months or older, compared to 12,289 (21.0 per cent) on 30 June 2023 and 19,905 (30.8 per cent) on 30 June 2021.

Figure 13 First Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015–16 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

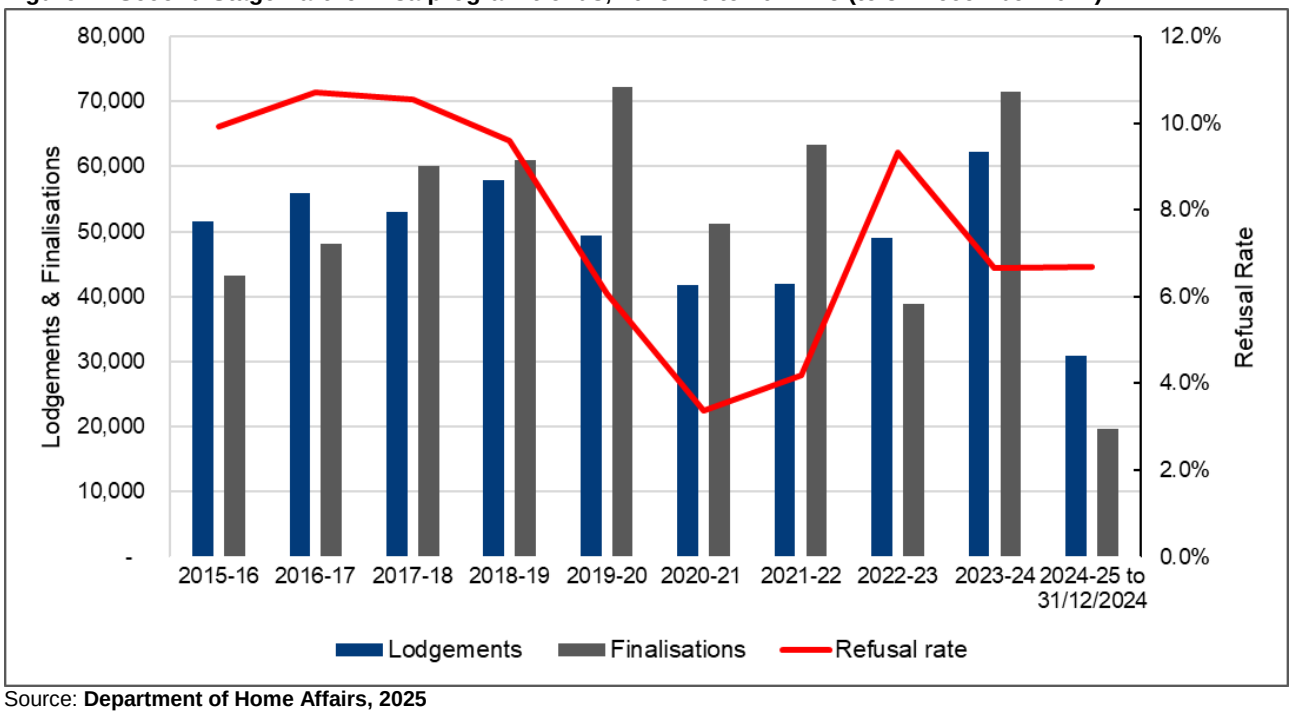
168. Partner visas are subject to a two-stage processing arrangement, with applicants lodging an application for a temporary and permanent Partner visa at once. The two-stage model ensures that only applicants in genuine and ongoing relationships are eligible for the benefits of permanent residence.

169. As part of the two-stage process, most applicants become eligible to be considered for the permanent visa two years after lodgement of the combined application.

170. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 17,469 second stage Partner visas were granted. The number of eligible second stage Partner visa applications on-hand was 26,011 as at 31 December 2024, remaining significantly lower than the 47,638 applications on-hand as at 30 June 2023.

171. The second stage Partner visa processing time at the 75th percentile in 2024–25 to 31 December 2024 was 16 months, up from 14 months for the full program year 2023–24.

Figure 14 Second Stage Partner visa program trends, 2015–16 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Parent visas

172. The planning level for Parent visas was increased to 8,500 places in 2022–23, from 4,500 in 2021–22. Planning levels for Parent visas has been maintained, with 8,500 places in 2024–25.

173. The Parent program is 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 Parent or Contributory Aged Parent visa, the date of lodgement will be considered to be the date of lodgement of the new visa application.

174. 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.

175. 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 that an application is released from the queue.

Sponsored Parent (Temporary) visa

176. The Sponsored Parent (Temporary) visa is a temporary family visa that allows parents of Australian citizens, permanent residents or eligible New Zealand citizens to reunite with their adult children in Australia for periods of up to three or five years at time, for a maximum cumulative stay of ten years.

Child visas

177. 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 are also processed under provisions for vulnerable children.

Processing times

178. 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

179. The Family Violence Provisions (FVPs), 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 family violence. 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.

180. In 2024–25, as at 31 December 2024, 273 primary Partner visa applicants sought access to the FVPs and 222 permanent Partner visas were granted based on claims of family violence.

181. As part of the 2023–24 Budget, the Government allocated $8.9 million to expand the FVPs to secondary applicants for most permanent visas and additional cohorts of Partner visa applicants.

182. Work on the expansion of the FVPs is being implemented in stages, as it involves significant amendments to the *Migration Regulations 1994* and complex changes to departmental ICT systems.

183. As of 17 December 2024, the FVPs have been expanded in 20 visa subclasses, across Skilled, Family and Business visas, this includes expanding the FVPs to additional cohorts in two Partner visa subclasses (Prospective Marriage (subclass 300) and Partner (subclass 309).

184. The FVPs have been expanded to secondary applicants of the following visas:

- Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186);
- Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (subclass 187);
- Skilled Independent (subclass 189);
- Skilled Nominated (subclass 190);
- Permanent Residence (subclass 191);
- Global Talent / National Innovation (subclass 858);
- Skilled Regional (subclass 887);
- Parent (subclass 103);
- Remaining Relative (subclass 115);
- Carer (subclass 116);
- Business Talent (subclass 132);
- Contributory Parent (subclass 143);
- Pacific Engagement Visa (subclass 192);

Pacific Engagement visa

185. The Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) is a new permanent visa that commenced in mid 2024 for eligible nationals of Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste. The PEV aims to boost permanent migration from the Pacific, grow Australia's Pacific and Timor-Leste diaspora and encourage greater cultural, business, investment, and educational exchange between Pacific island countries, Timor-Leste and Australia. Up to 3,000 visa places will be available each year through a ballot process.

186. Countries participating in the first year of the program include Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, providing new opportunities for nationals from these countries to live, work and study in Australia. Country participation and visa allocations will be reviewed annually and in consultation with partner governments.

187. The inaugural PEV ballot closed for online registrations on 16 August 2024. There was a high level of interest in the ballot, with 56,133 valid primary registrations submitted across all 10 participating countries.

Table 15 Number of primary registrations received in the PEV ballot, 2024–25 (as at 31 December 2024)

Country	Total PEV Ballots Received to 31/12/2024
Fiji	30,513
Federated States of Micronesia	8
Nauru	429
Palau	6
Papua New Guinea	8,097
Solomon Islands	2,570
Timor-Leste	7,019
Tonga	5,611
Tuvalu	926
Vanuatu	954
Total	**56,133**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2024**

188. The first and second rounds of ballot selections took place in August 2024 and January 2025. Successful ballot candidates are eligible to apply for a PEV within 120 days of ballot selection.

189. As at 31 December 2024, a total of 1,485 PEV applications have been lodged with the Department.

Relationship between temporary and permanent migration

190. Temporary migrants are a major source of permanent Skilled 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.

Table 16 Number of permanent primary visa applications lodged by client location, comparison 2022–23 and 2023–24, plus current year to date 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Visa category	2022–23			2023–24			2024–25 to 31/12/2024		
	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total	In Australia	Outside Australia	Total
Family	67,838	45,115	**112,953**	77,872	49,303	**127,175**	42,668	21,210	**63,878**
Other Permanent	5	134	**139**	<5	92	**95**	201	<480	**678**
Resident Return/ADV	179,639	48,517	**228,156**	163,483	50,217	**213,700**	78,723	23,841	**102,564**
Skilled	83,577	29,180	**112,757**	42,496	13,475	**55,971**	32,331	6,710	**39,041**
Special Eligibility	64	8	**72**	<110	5	**106**	61	<5	**64**
Total	**331,123**	**122,954**	**454,077**	**283,955**	**113,092**	**397,047**	**153,984**	**52,241**	**206,225**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

191. The number of lodgements under the permanent skilled program for applicants residing outside of Australia was 18.9 per cent of total lodgements between 1 July 2024 and 31 December 2024 compared to 12.9 per cent of total lodgements between 1 July 2023 and 31 December 2023.

192. Within the skilled program over the last three years, the majority of the visa grants in the Employer Sponsored category were to people who previously held a Temporary Work visa. Former Graduate and/or Student Visa holders comprised over half the proportion of visa grants for the State/Territory Nominated visas.

Immigration outreach and engagement

193. The Department delivers a range of communication and engagement activities to support immigration programs, through outreach, marketing campaigns, and the development of information products.

194. In 2024–25 (YTD 31 December 2024), the Department, through its Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO) network, facilitated and participated in more than 2,530 engagements with stakeholders at all levels to provide assistance and information on the migration program.

195. In December 2024, the Department commenced a webinar series to inform and educate external stakeholders on the two new Skills in Demand (SID) and National Innovation Visa (NIV) programs. The webinar series has reached over 2,125 stakeholders as at 31 December 2024 and will continue to be delivered into 2025, targeting key sectors and stakeholder groups.

196. The Department continues to deliver a range of targeted communication products and engagement activities to help strengthen the integrity of the Permanent Protection visa (PPV) program by raising awareness of the misuse of the PPV program and correcting misinformation about the PPV system to influence the behaviour of non-genuine PPV applicants.

197. More than 260 products including fact sheets, social media content, animations and case study videos have been created in 19 languages, to audiences in 14 target communities. As at 31 December 2024, the PV reform webpage received more than 25,000 page views and articles highlighting PV reform were published in 12 culturally and linguistically diverse media publications. Four new social media posts published in December 2024 on the Department's Facebook and LinkedIn accounts had almost 800 combined engagements, over 210 shares and reached over 144,800 viewers by 31 December 2024. The online questionnaire launched mid-December 2024, guiding potential applicants on whether they should apply for a PPV, was completed by more than 555 unique users by 31 December 2024.

Humanitarian Program

198. Since the end of World War II, Australia has successfully settled more than 950,000 refugees and others in humanitarian need, recognising the valuable contribution that refugees have provided, and continue to provide, to Australian society, culture and prosperity.

199. The Government is committed to generous and flexible Humanitarian and Settlement Programs that meet Australia's international protection obligations, and position Australia as a global leader in international resettlement efforts.

- A generous Humanitarian Program delivers on Australia's global resettlement commitments and allows us to benefit from the significant contributions of humanitarian entrants, who enrich Australian society and boost the economy with their skills, talent and diverse cultural vibrancy.
- It also places Australia in a strong position to shape global responses to humanitarian crises, and influence approaches to protection and resettlement in other countries within the region.

200. Australia's 2023-24 Humanitarian Program was increased to 20,000 places, the highest intake since 2012-13. The program was delivered in full and comprised:

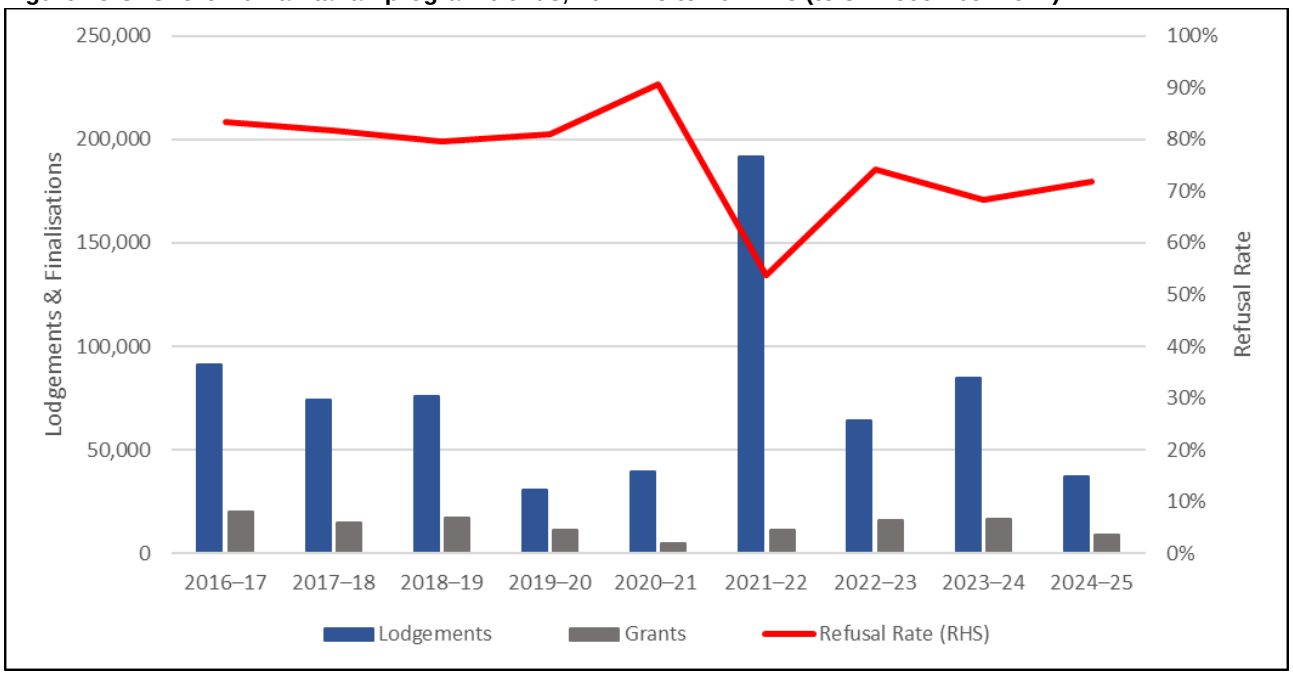
- 16,750 offshore visas; and
- 3,250 Protection visas.

201. As at 31 December 2024, there remained around 6,549 individuals who were granted an Offshore Humanitarian visa between 1 July 2019 and 30 September 2024, but are yet to travel to Australia. The Department works with state and territory governments and settlement service providers to plan and facilitate a staggered arrivals of those visa holders who are offshore.

202. The Government will maintain a total of 20,000 places in Australia's 2024–25 Humanitarian Program, ensuring that we can provide permanent resettlement to those most in need from around the world, and protection in Australia to those who are found to be owed it.

Offshore Humanitarian visas

Figure 15 Offshore Humanitarian program trends, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Dedicated places for Afghan nationals

203. The Australian Government has allocated 26,500 dedicated visa places for Afghans to migrate to Australia under the offshore Humanitarian Program through to 2026.

204. The Afghan commitment of 6,125 places for 2023–24 was delivered in full. Grants to Afghans represent almost 42.0 per cent of the total offshore humanitarian visa program grants in 2023–24.

Settlement services for humanitarian entrants and evacuees

205. Humanitarian migrants have access to a range of specialised settlement services funded through the Department of Home Affairs, including Assisted Passage (AP) to facilitate medical checks and flights to Australia, and intensive settlement support services through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) on arrival in Australia.

206. The HSP supports humanitarian entrants integrate into Australian life by building the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the community in their first 12-18 months. HSP clients receive a package of support tailored to their individual needs, strengths and goals. Support generally includes airport reception, short term accommodation, a package of basic household goods, assistance to find long-term accommodation in the private rental market, access to mainstream and specialist support services, and support to connect with the local community.

- As at 31 December 2024, there were 21,891 clients receiving Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) settlement services.

207. In 2023–24 SETS assisted 45,408 individual clients and 25,124 group clients.

208. The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program provides ongoing low to moderate level support to humanitarian entrants as well as family and partner visa holders with low English proficiency, and working and skilled visa holders (dependants only in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency), including:
    - Those arriving under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) family accompaniment pilot, and Pacific Engagement Visa;
    - Israeli and Palestinian nationals who have been granted a Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) visa (subclass 449) or a Humanitarian Concern (Temporary) visa (subclass 786); and
    - Ukrainian nationals who have been granted a Resolution of Status (RoS) visa (subclass 851).
209. The new Humanitarian Integration and Settlement Program (HISP) will replace the HSP and Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program and will embed better practise settlement principles supporting client-centric, strengths and self-agency service models to achieve outcomes aligned with the *Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework*.
210. The Outcomes Framework, developed after extensive consultation with the settlement sector, service providers and people with lived experience, builds on the strong foundation of Australia's world-class settlement services and is intended to:
    - Improve our settlement services.
    - Enhance positive settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.
    - Guide government agencies delivering settlement services from planning through to programs and evaluation.
211. The Framework comprises eleven interrelated domains and two underpinning principles that reflect an area critical to successful settlement and integration.
212. In consultation with relevant Commonwealth agencies, the Department is currently finalising indicators to deepen understanding of how refugees are tracking against expected outcomes for each domain in the Framework.
213. The Department released a Request for Tender (RFT) in November 2024, to procure services for the new Humanitarian, Integration and Settlement Program.
    - The design of HISP has taken into consideration feedback from a Request for Information released in November 2023, community consultations and best practice models within current and recent settlement services models and include input from key sector representatives.
    - Insights and feedback from online HISP Consultation Sessions, facilitated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Settlement Council of Australia, have also been reflected in the design process. The two sessions took place on 16 and 17 July 2024 and were attended by 172 members of the settlement sector and other interested parties and were based on themed questions including Pre-Arrival Needs Assessments, Basic Household Goods, Economic Participation, Health, Flexibility, Funding, Workforce and Reporting.
    - The consultation sessions were an opportunity for stakeholders to come together to discuss and inform the proposed principles and elements of the design to the HISP before the Department's approach to market.
214. The HISP is expected to come into effect from 1 July 2026.

Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors

215. The Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM) Program provides care and accommodation to eligible non-citizen minors who arrive in Australia without a parent. Some unaccompanied minors receiving services under the UHM Program are under the guardianship of the Minister in accordance with the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*. As of 31 December 2024, there are 200 minors receiving UHM Program services in Australia, 82 of whom are under the Minister's guardianship.

216. 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 2022–23, 53 grants in 2023–24 and 45 grants in 2024–25 (up to 31 December 2024).

Onshore Protection

217. Reforms to Australia's Protection visa system announced by the Australian Government on 5 October 2023 to remove incentives for non-genuine applicants to apply for protection, and reduce legacy backlogs, have significantly reduced the time taken to finalise a permanent Protection (subclass 866) application.

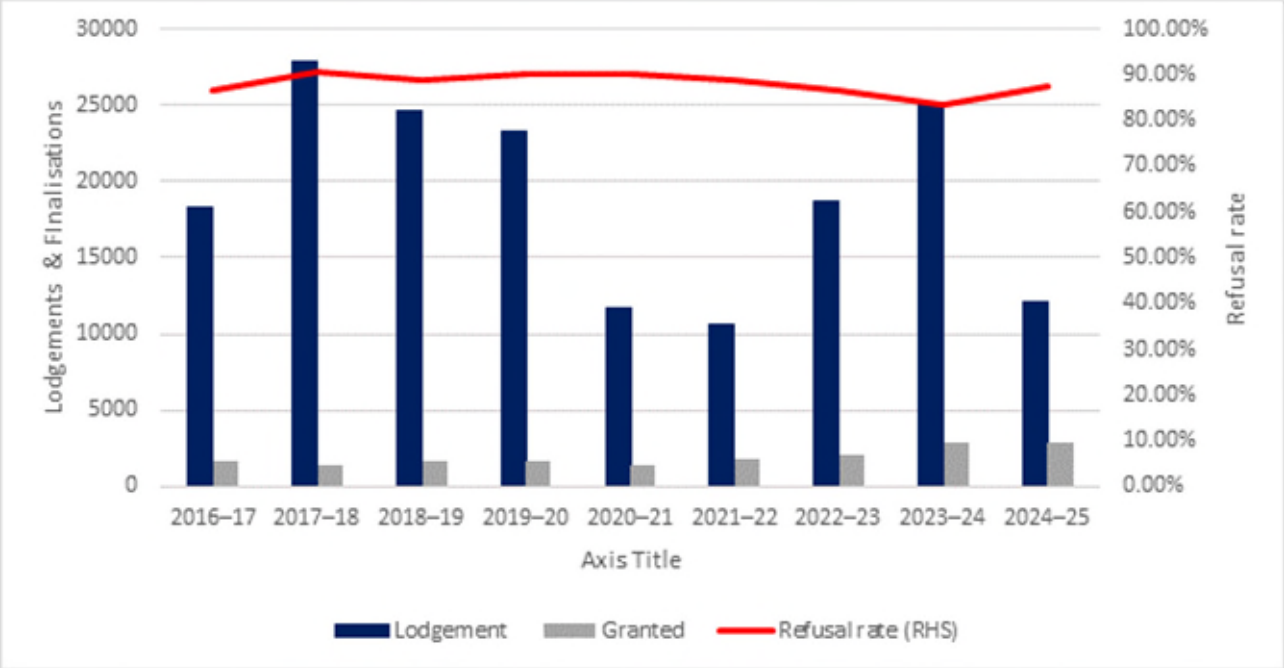
- While processing times may be subject to fluctuations over time, most new permanent Protection visa applications are finalised approximately 8 times faster than before October 2023. The on-hand caseload has stabilised and begun reducing following consistent prior growth.
- Visa finalisations are at an all-time high, consistently outstripping lodgements - 19,700 Protection visa applications were finalised in 2023–24, the highest number of decisions made in a single program year over the past decade.
- Effective whole-of-system interventions have been applied to amplify impacts of faster processing, including targeted strategic communications and integrity and compliance activities.

218. Approximately 90.0 per cent of the individuals who applied for protection since July 2014 have either departed Australia, been granted a visa, or remain lawfully here while they have ongoing matters before the Department or under a merits review or judicial review. Individuals who do not have a valid visa and have no matters ongoing are expected to either voluntarily return home or be removed from Australia by the ABF.

219. 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.

220. The Department has consistently refused between 80.0 to 90.0 per cent of applications for a Protection visa since 2016-17 (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Protection Program trends, 2016–17 to 31 December 2024



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Table 17 Permanent Protection visa grants and grant rates from 2020–21 to 2024–25 to 31 December 2024[13]

Citizenship (Top 10)	2020–2021		2021–2022		2022–2023		2023–2024		2024–25	
	Grant	Grant rate	Grant	Grant rate	Grant	Grant rate	Grant	Grant rate	Grant	Grant rate
Myanmar	7	22.6%	33	68.8%	427	91.4%	900	99.4%	404	99.0%
China (exc. Sar)	90	2.0%	149	3.8%	255	8.4%	304	10.2%	158	6.8%
Malaysia	57	1.9%	58	2.0%	46	1.9%	257	23.0%	439	50.9%
Pakistan	151	42.2%	140	52.6%	171	60.2%	237	52.0%	108	45.8%
Iran	202	68.2%	218	80.7%	89	92.7%	119	74.8%	151	74.0%
Afghanistan	79	84.0%	110	94.0%	83	94.3%	111	94.1%	44	88.0%
Papua New Guinea	24	64.9%	84	50.6%	94	63.1%	109	40.4%	55	47.8%
Iraq	81	76.4%	37	61.7%	80	82.5%	111	83.5%	20	52.6%
Türkiye	103	70.5%	93	64.1%	33	78.6%	46	67.6%	13	52.0%
Yemen	74	100.0%	79	100.0%	12	92.3%	91	100.0%	15	25.4%
Other	521	9.0%	761	10.0%	710	9.0%	965	7.0%	410	4.0%
Total	**1389**	**10.2%**	**1762**	**11.2%**	**2000**	**13.6%**	**3250**	**16.0%**	**1,817**	**12.2%**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA) Legacy Caseload

221. In February 2023, the Australian Government provided a permanent visa pathway to existing Temporary Protection visa (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise visa (SHEV) holders through the permanent Resolution of Status (RoS) visa

222. This policy provides the opportunity for those people who have been found to engage Australia's protection obligations an opportunity for permanent residency.

- Persons who do not engage protection obligations, who are not awaiting a merits or judicial review outcome, and who have exhausted all avenues to remain in Australia, are expected to depart Australia voluntarily and may be provided assistance to depart.

223. As at 31 December 2024, there have been 19,589 RoS visa grants.

- 2,144 initial TPV, SHEV and RoS applications remain on hand for processing.

224. 195 persons at merits review, and 4,240 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 application, may be subsequently granted their RoS visa.

- 160 former TPV/SHEV holders whose visas have expired or have been cancelled onshore.
- 2,490 people who do not engage Australia's protection obligations as their TPV or SHEV has been refused, and they who have no ongoing matters. These persons are not eligible for a RoS visa.
- 3,489 UMAs 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, are deceased, or have resolved their status via another visa grant.

[13] Grant rate percentages are subject to the number of grants and refusals. The Top 10 citizenships are based on the overall grant rates between the 2020-2021 to 2024–2025 program years.

Adult Migrant English Program

225. The Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) is a free service to help eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants with low English levels to improve their English language skills and settle into Australia.
226. The AMEP is delivered by 13 service providers at around 300 locations across Australia in major cities as well as regional and remote areas. The department also contracts a quality assurance provider.
227. The AMEP offers face-to-face and online classes, a volunteer tutor scheme and distance learning. Full-time, part-time, evening and weekend classes are available.
228. Free childcare is available to clients with children under school age while they participate in a face-to-face AMEP class.
229. AMEPOnline (htttps://ameponline.homeaffairs.gov.au) is a freely available departmental resource for anyone wanting to study English. It offers a range of engaging, interactive, audio and video activities across five English levels.
230. The AMEP recorded 69,046 enrolments in the 2023–24 year. This was the highest level of participation since 1990-91.
231. As of 10 December 2024, the AMEP had recorded 53,915 enrolments in the 2024–25 year. This represents a 4.9 per cent increase on the number of enrolments at the same point in 2023–24, which was itself a record year.
232. Further information about the AMEP is available on the department's website at: https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/amep

Australian Citizenship Program

233. 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.
234. Applications for Australian citizenship generally fall within four categories: conferral (the most common way of acquiring citizenship through application, representing 91.0 per cent of all applications in 2024–25 as at 31 December 2024), descent, adoption and resumption.
    - In the 2023–24 program year, 192,242 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral compared with 192,947 in 2022–23. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, over 73,700 people acquired Australian citizenship by conferral.

Citizenship by conferral

235. Australian citizenship by conferral is available to permanent residents (including permanent visa holders and New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category (subclass 444) visa (SCV), who meet relevant eligibility requirements, including residency, knowledge of Australia, English language, identity, character and an intention to reside in Australia.
236. More than 192,900 citizenship by conferral applications were finalised in 2023–24. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, more than 91,400 citizenship by conferral applications were finalised, representing a decrease of 17.0 per cent in comparison to the same period in the 2023–24 program year.

Table 18 Number of Australian citizenship by conferral applications finalised, by decision type and financial year, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

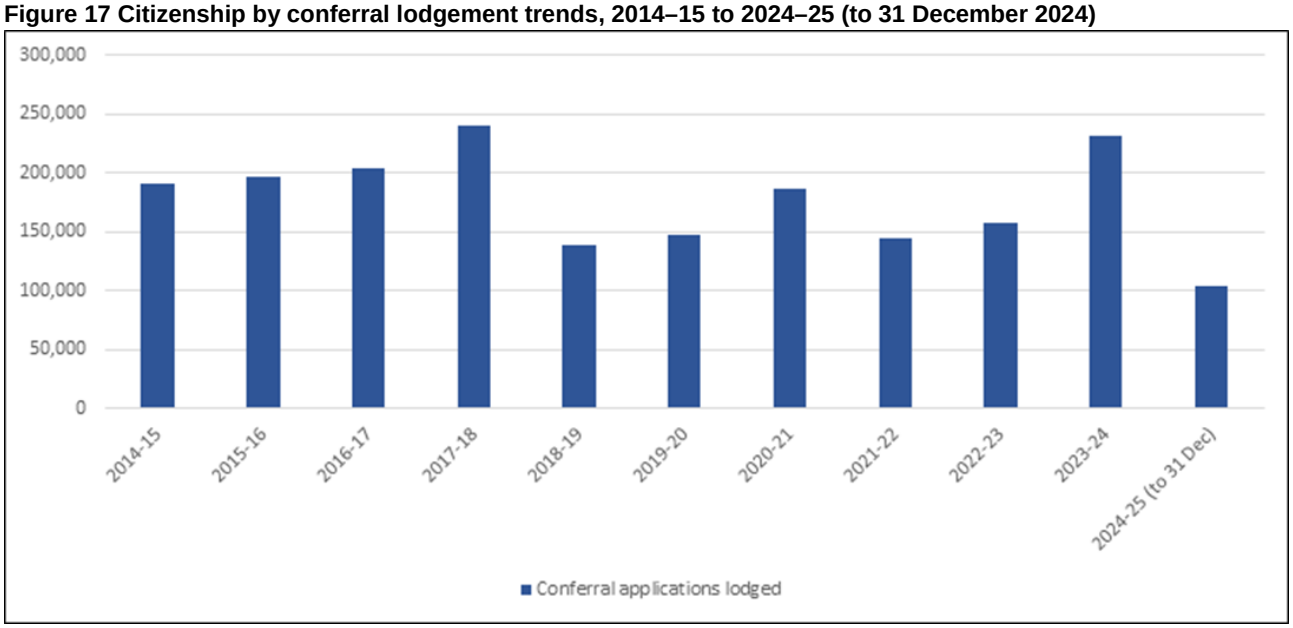
Program year	Approved	Refused	Invalid	Other[14]	Total
2014–15	148,862	5,197	34,987	795	**189,841**
2015–16	129,515	4,749	32,612	792	**167,668**
2016–17	127,013	4,089	22,035	742	**153,879**
2017–18	80,776	4,956	14,998	692	**101,422**
2018–19	145,587	7,590	5,713	1,227	**160,117**
2019–20	215,394	8,762	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	174,880	11,781	5,116	1,217	**192,994**
2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)	84,916	3,822	2,171	541	**91,450**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

237. Once citizenship is conferred, it can be revoked only in extremely limited circumstances. From 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2024, 53 individuals had their Australian citizenship revoked for criminal conduct, including for citizenship or migration fraud.

238. There continues to be strong interest from migrants applying to become Australian citizens. In 2023–24, 231,012 applications for citizenship by conferral were lodged. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 104,522 applications for citizenship by conferral were lodged.

Figure 17 Citizenship by conferral lodgement trends, 2014–15 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

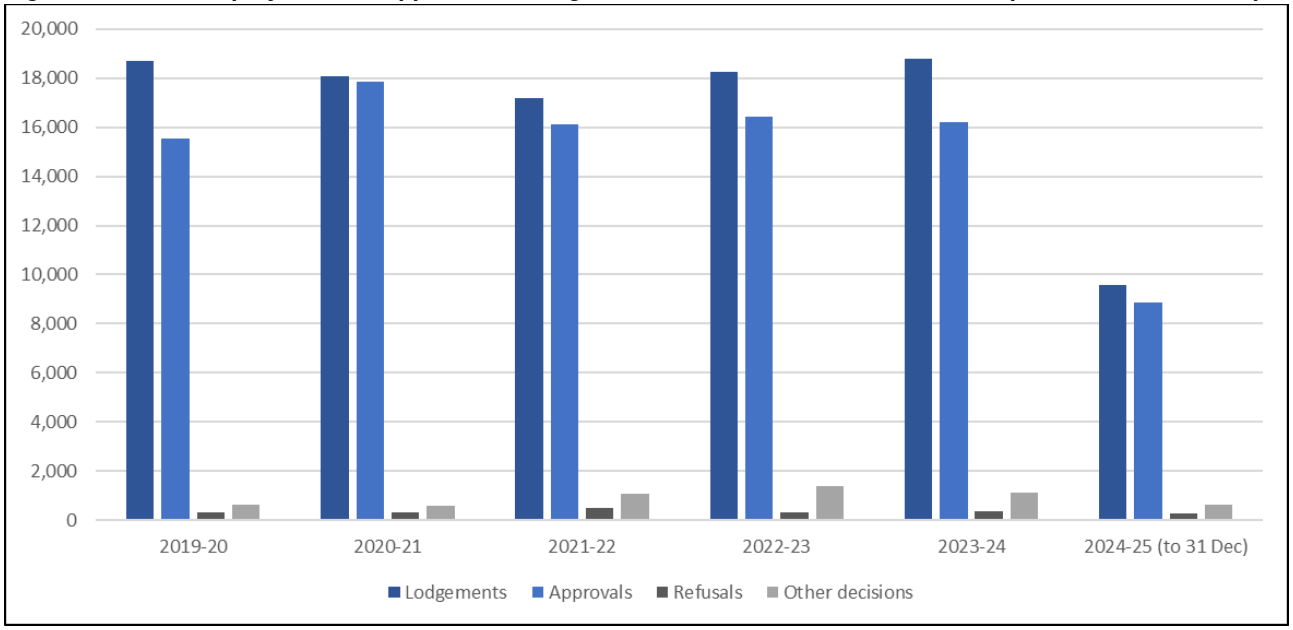
Citizenship by descent

239. 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), can apply for Australian citizenship by descent regardless of their age.

[14] Other includes applications withdrawn by the client and minor numbers of administrative finalisations.

240. In 2023–24, 16,197 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent (see Figure 18). This represents a 1.0 per cent decrease compared to the 2022–23 program year. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 8,854 people acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

Figure 18 Citizenship by descent applications lodged and finalised, 2019–20 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)[15]



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

241. In 2023–24, 361 children born through surrogacy arrangements acquired Australian citizenship by descent. Their main countries of birth were, in numerical order, the United States of America, Georgia, Canada, Colombia, Ukraine and Mexico. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 187 children born through surrogacy arrangements acquired Australian citizenship by descent.

Citizenship by adoption

242. Children adopted outside of Australia by an Australian citizen under the Hague Convention or a bilateral arrangement, can apply for Australian citizenship. Twenty-one children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption in 2023–24, an increase from 14 in the previous program year. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, less than five children acquired Australian citizenship by adoption.

Citizenship by resumption

243. 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 2023–24, 121 people resumed Australian citizenship, compared to 96 in the previous program year. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 75 people resumed Australian citizenship.

Citizenship service delivery

244. The Department is committed to ensuring the efficient processing of citizenship applications and reducing processing times.

245. As at 31 December 2024, the number of on-hand conferral applications was 131,352, a 46.0 per cent increase from 31 December 2023 (89,832 on-hand).

- This increase is primarily due to the increase in citizenship by conferral applications from New Zealand citizens (please refer to *Direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealanders* below).

[15] Other decisions include invalidated applications, applications withdrawn by the client and administrative finalisations.

246. The average processing time from lodgement to decision for applications decided in December 2024 increased by 3.0 per cent from December 2023 (from 8 months (239 days) to 8 months (245 days)).

247. In 2023–24, 187,392 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony. Of these, 186,953 attended in-person and 439 online. In 2024–25 to 31 December 2024, 72,383 people acquired citizenship at a ceremony (72,116 in-person and 267 online).

Direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealanders

248. The Department implemented the Government's priority of providing a direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens.

249. In the period from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024, 75,912 citizenship by conferral applications were received from New Zealand citizens holding an SCV. These represent 23.0 per cent of all citizenship by conferral applications received in this period.

250. As at 31 December 2024, of the 75,912 Australian citizenship by conferral applications received since 1 July 2023 from New Zealand citizens holding an SCV, 52,143 applications had been approved.

Managing risk and community protection

Risk Environment

251. The majority of non-citizens entering Australia are genuine entrants who comply with their visa conditions. However, there are individuals and groups that seek to exploit visa and citizenship programs.

252. Migrants will continue to seek opportunities in prosperous countries, such as Australia. Heightened awareness will be required for aspiring migrants who cannot meet visa criteria and may turn to fraud to achieve migration goals.

253. Some non-citizens who are strongly motivated to work in Australia may be manipulated and exploited by unscrupulous employers and labour hire intermediaries.

254. 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.

255. In response, the Department has bolstered its ability to accurately identify both non-genuine visa applicants and facilitators who exploit them, thereby supporting faster processing for the majority of genuine visa applicants. This has been made possible by investing in specialist teams, innovative use of data and technology as well as improved cooperation and information flows.

256. Since 2020, the Department's risk and integrity capability has expanded through a multi-layered approach to risk across the immigration continuum, and improved partnerships between visa and citizenship program delivery teams and risk and integrity teams. This cooperation has extended to the Immigration Compliance Group, which was established on 27 February 2024 and will further strengthen this end-to-end approach in managing risk at all stages of a traveller's journey.

257. In addition, data holdings and system analysis enables the Department to identify, assess and mitigate risk in visa applications and border-related transactions. This also allows the Department to better monitor a visa holder's compliance with visa conditions.

258. Risk identification and mitigation is enhanced by collaboration with partner agencies in Australia and overseas. This cooperation provides a deeper understanding of immigration fraud and non-compliance, which informs the management of risk in Australia's visa and citizenship programs.

Reforms and Policy implementation

People smuggling

The Australian Government remains committed to Operation Sovereign Borders, countering maritime people smuggling and preventing avoidable deaths at sea. The Department will continue to detect and intercept anyone who attempts an irregular boat voyage to Australia and return them to their country of departure or origin, where it is safe to do so. People who cannot be safely returned will be transferred to Nauru for regional processing. People who travel to Australia irregularly by boat will not settle in Australia.

Maritime People Smuggling

259. The following table highlights returns and transfers across 2023 – 2025 financial years.

Table 19 Returns and transfers, 2023–24 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Financial Year	Returned to Country of origin or departure		Transferred to a regional processing country	
	People	Ventures[16]	People	Ventures[7]
2023–24	30	7	109	6
2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)	128	5	27	6

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

260. Close cooperation with regional partners has resulted in the below disruption of maritime people smuggling ventures targeting Australia by foreign law enforcement agencies[17].

Table 20 Ventures and potential irregular immigrants (PII) disrupted, 2023–24 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Financial Year	Ventures disrupted	PII disrupted
2023–24	8	55
2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)	2	27

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

261. It has been over 11 years since the last known death at sea from maritime people smuggling ventures en-route to Australia, and almost 11 years since the arrival of the last successful[18] people smuggling venture to Australia

Migrant worker exploitation

262. Exploitation, as defined in Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth), 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.

263. The Government has zero tolerance for the exploitation of workers, regardless of their visa status.

[16] Ventures may be resolved by any combination of a return to country of origin or departure and a transfer to regional processing and may therefore be counted across both columns.

[17] Statistics are provided by AFP posts, based on advice received by foreign law enforcement, and are indicative only as they are subject to a range of factors that may affect accuracy and quality. Post experience is that results are typically under-reported because arrests in regional locations are occasionally not reported.

[18] 'Successful' maritime people smuggling ventures are defined in this context as those not disrupted, turned back, returned, or transferred to a regional processing country.

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

- The Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) (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; and
- The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), which is the lead agency for advice, education, compliance and enforcement activities under the Fair Work Act.

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

266. While the national workplace relations system provides temporary visa holders working in Australia the same basic workplace rights and protections as Australian citizens and permanent residents, the Government recognises that migrant workers can be 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.

267. The Government takes a whole-of-government approach to addressing migrant worker exploitation. This involves collaboration between a range of agencies including the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Attorney-General's Department, the FWO, the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Taxation Office and the AFP.

268. The Department is committed to ensuring that Australia's visa programs are not misused to exploit migrant workers. It provides information about worker rights and entitlements available to visa holders through visa grant notices and text messages, and it also administers three legislative frameworks to achieve this goal:

- The 'Employer' scheme seeks to ensure employers only employ visa holders with appropriate work rights, recognising that visa programs are designed for specific purposes. This scheme is supported by the Department's Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system which enables migrant workers and potential employers to verify a visa holder's immigration status and the conditions attached to their visa.
- The 'Paying for Visa Sponsorship' legislation outlines offences for asking for, or receiving a benefit in return for a sponsorship related event. The offences seek 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 people involved in 'paying for visa sponsorship'.
- The 'Sponsorship Obligations' scheme seeks to ensure sponsored visa holders are not exploited by their sponsors. A breach may involve a sponsor not providing their sponsored worker the same terms and conditions of employment that are offered to other workers, not ensuring the visa holder is working in the occupation for which they were nominated (the gap they were sponsored to address), or unlawfully recovering costs from the visa holder.

269. Under these legislative frameworks, enforcement officers in the Department of Home Affairs have a range of tools to respond proportionately to cases of visa non-compliance. This includes education activities and warnings, infringements, civil penalties, an ability to cancel or bar employer sponsors from using the program, and criminal offences.

270. On 1 July 2024, the Government implemented the Strengthening Employer Compliance Act 2024 (SEC Act), which strengthened the legislative framework available under the Migration Act by increasing the enforcement capabilities of Home Affairs to address non-compliance with employer obligations through:
    - Three new criminal offences for effectively using a person's visa status to exploit them in the workplace;
    - A power to prohibit dishonest employers from employing additional temporary migrant workers for a period of time where that employer has engaged in serious, deliberate or repeated exploitation;
    - Increased penalties for non-compliance with employer obligations and new compliance tools (Compliance Notices and Enforceable Undertakings) to support a proportionate response to non-compliance, and
    - Repeal of section 235 of the Migration Act, under which it was a criminal offence to work in breach of a visa condition, or to work as an unlawful non-citizen, and which deterred some temporary migrants from reporting workplace issues.
271. Implementation of the SEC Act:
    - The Government agreed to $50 million in funding over four years from 2023–24 and $15.3 million per year - ongoing from 2027–28 for an uplift in immigration compliance and the implementation of the SEC Act.
    - Funding from 2025–26, will be held in the Contingency Reserve, pending an evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities
    - A communication and engagement plan has been implemented, including web content, social media posts and a comic strip translated in key languages, with engagement supported by the Business Industry Regional Outreach and Community Liaison Officer networks.
    - Operation FORESIGHT resulted in 950 educational interactions in the lead up to the commencement of the legislation.
    - Operation GREENTALE draws insights from Operation FORESIGHT to focus on immigration compliance and enforcement in targeted industries - agriculture, hospitality, accommodation and transport.
    - On 4 December 2024, ABF College commenced a training course for Field Operations officers which includes the SEC Act measures.
272. On 14 May 2024, as part of ongoing initiatives to address migrant worker exploitation, the Government approved an allocation of $15 million in the Federal Budget for a program titled *Protecting Migrant Workers – Information and Education Package*. This program supports a key objective of the Migration Strategy to ensure a fair go in the workplace by preventing migrant worker exploitation.
273. The Department has engaged a market research company to conduct behavioural insight research to identify whether temporary migrant workers, employers/labour hire intermediaries and the broader community understand that national workplace laws apply regardless of a person's immigration status, and to assess whether the same cohorts are aware of new initiatives implemented to address migrant worker exploitation.
274. This research also analyses current attitudes towards reporting exploitation among temporary migrant workers and the broader community. It will identify the most effective communication approaches, key messages, preferred channels and delivery methods to educate migrant workers, employers/labour hire intermediaries and the community about workplace rights and obligations.
275. The behavioural insight field research is currently in progress. Preliminary findings will be shared with the Department in January 2025.
276. Research findings will inform Home Affairs' communication and engagement on reforms to address migrant worker exploitation.

277. The funding has also supported the development of small-scale information and education products to support the implementation of the *Strengthening Employer Compliance Act 2024,* and the *Strengthening Reporting Protections and Workplace Justice Visa* pilots.

278. In January 2023, Christine Nixon, AO, APM, was appointed to undertake a Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System.

279. The Review identified weaknesses in Australia's visa system resulting in 34 recommendations, arising from seven key findings.

280. The Government response to the Nixon Review addresses the identified gaps and is rebuilding the integrity of the visa system.

281. The response complements work already being progressed by the Australian Government to address migrant worker exploitation (MWE), under the new Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Act 2024 (the SEC Act) and the Strengthening Reporting Protections and Workplace Justice Visa Pilots.

282. These reforms are strategic initiatives to protect migrant workers, and prevent, deter and sanction individuals who seek to misuse Australia's visa and migration system to exploit vulnerable migrants.

Table 21 ABF Migrant Worker Enforcement Activities, 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024

Outcome	Total
Site visits conducted	**1706**
Education	**1079**
IWWN (Warning letters)	**24**
Employer Sponsorship Cancellation	**93**
Employer Sponsor Bar	**23**
Compliance Notice	**11**
Infringements	**11**
Infringement value	**$737,718**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Specific Reforms

283. Following the review the Department established a new Division in November 2023, the Division adds additional enforcement and compliance activities to maintain the integrity of the migration system, with approximately 340 Australian Border Force (ABF) staff transitioning to the Division by 29 January 2024.

284. The Division is supported by $50.0 million over 4 years from 2023–24 (and $15.3 million per year ongoing) for additional enforcement and compliance activities to maintain the integrity of the migration system.

285. Additionally, the Immigration Compliance Group was established on 27 February 2024 to further improve immigration compliance by better aligning and integrating functions, and enhancing the collective effort across the immigration continuum.

Safeguards and protections for temporary migrant workers

286. The Government has implemented a range of measures to address migrant worker exploitation by amending regulations that could deter temporary migrant workers from asserting their workplace rights without damaging the integrity of the migration program. These changes include:

- Enhanced **mobility** provisions for temporary migrants under certain 'employer sponsored' programs (subclass 482, 494, and 457 visas), which make it easier for sponsored workers to leave an exploitative employer (the change commenced 1 July 2024).
- A **Strengthening Reporting Protections** pilot, which provides protection from visa cancellation in prescribed circumstances to address fears that reporting exploitation or leaving an exploitative employer will result in visa cancellation. This pilot balances the Government's commitment to address migrant worker exploitation alongside its commitment to uphold the integrity of the migration program (the change commenced 24 July 2024).
- A **Workplace Justice** visa pilot, to enable migrant workers who have been exploited while working in Australia to extend their stay for a short period to effectively pursue workplace claims (the change commenced 24 July 2024).

287. The two pilots rely on effective cooperation with experts in workplace relations to certify the workplace exploitation matter and appropriately support the visa holder to pursue an outcome. The pilots are scheduled to run for two-years, and they will be subject to ongoing monitoring and an evaluation.

288. The Department has integrated immigration compliance policy, intelligence and operations, and is engaging with stakeholders across government. As part of this, the newly established Division has enabled centralised coordination of engagement with regulatory and law enforcement authorities, including:

- Enhancing the Human Trafficking Contact Officer network within the Department, through implementing an improved, centralised model to strengthen engagement and responsiveness both within and between the Department and AFP on migrant worker exploitation.
- The Department is working in collaboration with Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to improve compliance and worker outcomes in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM).
- Enhanced support and coordinated involvement in various whole-of-government forums, taskforces and joint operational working groups.

289. The *Strengthening Employer Compliance Act* commenced on 1 July 2024 and strengthened the legislative framework available under the Migration Act and the enforcement capabilities of the Department and the ABF to address employer non-compliance.

290. The Government also introduced a package of reforms in July that focused on enhancing protections to encourage temporary migrants to report exploitation and resolve workplace issues in a timely manner. This included enhanced mobility provisions for certain employer sponsored workers, and implementation of the Strengthening Reporting Protections and the Workplace Justice Visa pilots.

291. The Department continues to progress ongoing initiatives to address migrant worker exploitation through a program titled *Protecting Migrant Workers – Information and Education Package*. This program supports a key objective of the Migration Strategy to ensure a fair go in the workplace by preventing migrant worker exploitation.

292. The ABF has centralised operations to focus on combatting migrant worker exploitation and targeting those who exploit the visa system, while continuing to focus operations that contribute to community protection.

293. The Department continues to undertake ABF-led multi-agency compliance operations with partner agencies as recommended by the Nixon Review to disrupt and deter migrant worker exploitation activity, including human trafficking.

294. Following the recommendation and implementation of the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Act 2024 (The SEC Act), the ABF established Operation GREENTALE on 01 July 2024 as an overarching national operation targeting immigration non-compliance, the exploitation of migrant workers and Australia's migration system across all industries, including the sex industry. Operation GREENTALE also focuses on issuing infringements, compliance notices and enforceable undertakings, and prohibiting employers in conjunction with the new laws.

295. New measures under the SEC Act that came into effect on 1 July 2024 provide the Department and ABF with an expanded legislative framework to enforce employer compliance and protect temporary migrant workers from exploitation.

Unlawful Non-Citizens

296. 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.

297. As at 30 June 2024, there were an estimated 75,400 UNCs in Australia. This estimate excludes persons in held and community detention, and 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.

298. 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.

299. 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

300. All non-citizens who apply for, and are granted a visa, are expected to obey Australian laws and meet and continue to meet, character, health, identity, security and other eligibility requirements set out in Migration legislation. These requirements ensure the health, safety and security of the Australian community.

301. The visa cancellation framework supports the Department's core objective of protecting the Australian community and the integrity of Australia's borders and visa programs.

302. Section 501 of the Act and the general cancellation powers allow for the 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 Act for a number of reasons, including if they have a substantial criminal record.

303. The Minister has powers under the Act to set-aside decisions made by the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) and cancel or refuse a person's visa if the Minister is satisfied that the person does not pass the character test and that it is in the 'national interest' to cancel or refuse the visa.

304. Ministerial Direction (MD) 110 came into effect on 21 June 2024 and operates to prioritise the principles of community safety when making visa decisions.

Table 22 Adverse section 501 (character) decisions[19], 2022–23 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)[20]

Character Decisions	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Minister Decisions			
Cancelled by Minister	6	7	<10
Refused by Minister	<5	5	<5
AAT or Delegate decision set aside by the Minister	0	76	31
Delegate Decisions			
Mandatory Cancellation	615	501	456
Discretionary Cancellation by Delegate	<5	28	12
Refused by Delegate	140	188	378
Mandatory Cancellations not revoked	356	331	179
Total	**1,123**	**1,136**	**1,066**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

305. In May 2024, the former Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security and former Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs directed the Department to urgently review a number of character related decisions, including all section 501 character decisions set aside by the review tribunal, and prepare submissions for consideration of their personal, non-delegable powers to cancel or refuse the visa in the national interest.

306. The increase in submissions for the Ministers' consideration led to an increase in cancellation and refusal decisions made under the Ministers' personal powers.

307. Visa cancellations are country agnostic, however as New Zealand citizens can remain in Australia indefinitely on a Special Category (subclass 444 visa) visa, there is a high proportion of New Zealand citizens who are long-term resident in Australia and come into visa cancellation scope.

[19] Does not include s501F decisions, these are counted in the General Cancellations table.

[20] 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.

Table 23 Top five citizenships with adverse section 501 (character) outcomes, 2022–23 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Character cancellation	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Total
New Zealand	277	244	220	741
United Kingdom	36	37	35	108
Vietnam	35	27	11	73
China	20	28	21	69
India	15	22	24	61
All Other	242	246	195	683
Total	**625**	**604**	**506**	**1,735**
Character refusal	**2022–23**	**2023–24**	**2024–25**	**Total**
United Kingdom	23	54	103	180
New Zealand	20	39	64	123
United States Of America	7	7	68	82
Vietnam	9	7	8	24
Iran	7	6	6	19
India	12	<5	<5	19
Singapore	0	<5	<20	19
All Other	65	84	116	265
Total	**143**	**203**	**385**	**731**
Character revocations (not revoked)	**2022–23**	**2023–24**	**2024–25**	**Total**
New Zealand	139	123	65	327
United Kingdom	18	26	12	56
Sudan	18	15	7	40
Vietnam	13	<20	<10	35
Iraq	18	<10	<5	31
All Other	162	145	87	394
Total	**368**	**335**	**180**	**883**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

308. The number of New Zealand citizens whose visas have been cancelled should be viewed in the context of the size of the New Zealand community in Australia, which is the largest non-citizen cohort

Table 24 General cancellation decisions, 2022–23 to 2024–25 (to 31 December)[21]

General cancellation decisions	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Incorrect Information (s109)	145	129	114
General Power (s116)	1884	3,189	2,224
Holder Overseas (s128)	10,934	22,822	14,754
All Other Powers[22]	2,128	2,120	1,920
Total	**15,091**	**28,260**	**19,012**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

[21] 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.

[22] Does not include any s501 character statistics, only s501F decision are included.

309. The upward trend in general visa cancellation activity in 2024–25 is the result of a number of initiatives within the Character and Cancellation Branch, including a resourcing (FTE) uplift to the branch through the Student Visa integrity measures NPP, with its focus on Student Visa cancellations; streamlining efforts relating to offshore general visa cancellations; a focused effort on integrity cancellations such as the Fraudulent Nationality Scam (FNS) caseload and targeted cancellation activity in the 400 series caseload (including the Temporary Skill Shortage (Short-term) visa (subclass 482) and the Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (subclass 403), for example where the worker has ceased employment with a sponsor or has withdrawn from the program).
310. The General Cancellations Network has undertaken a number of high-profile special interest cancellations, including the cancellation of visas held by unlawful providers of immigration assistance, controversial social media content creators, visitors and public figures, Emergency Cancellations under section 134B, and, Operation INGLENOOK persons of interest, amongst others.

Student Visa cancellation caseload

311. The Student Visa Cancellations Section was inaugurated in January 2024 and in its first 12 months has finalised 12,610 cases. This includes 10,509 decisions to cancel. The offshore visa cancellation caseload made up 73.0 per cent of the cancellation caseload, comprising 9,175 cases.
312. The majority of the cancellation decisions are based on grounds where the visa holder has not complied with a visa condition, predominantly non-enrolment.
313. The increase in section 116 and section 128 cancellation in 2023–24 reflects the Government's focus on integrity in the Student Visa program, and complements a suite of measures introduced in 2024 to strengthen integrity within the International education sector.

Status resolution

314. 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.

Entering the Status Resolution program

315. 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. The Status Resolution Program also conducts regional outreach visits to engage with individuals whose immigration status may need to be resolved.

Table 25 People who entered the Status Resolution program, 2022–23 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Persons who voluntarily approached the Department	10,027	10,338	3,364
Persons located by the Australian Border Force or police	1,750	1,949	1,193
Total	**11,777**	**12,287**	**4,557**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

316. 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 26 Status Resolution population as at 31 December 2024

Status Resolution population	Bridging E visa in effect	Residence Determination	Held Detention	Total
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMA)	7,629	128	99	7,856
Non-UMA	18,387	27	880	19,294
Total	**26,016**	**155**	**979**	**27,150**

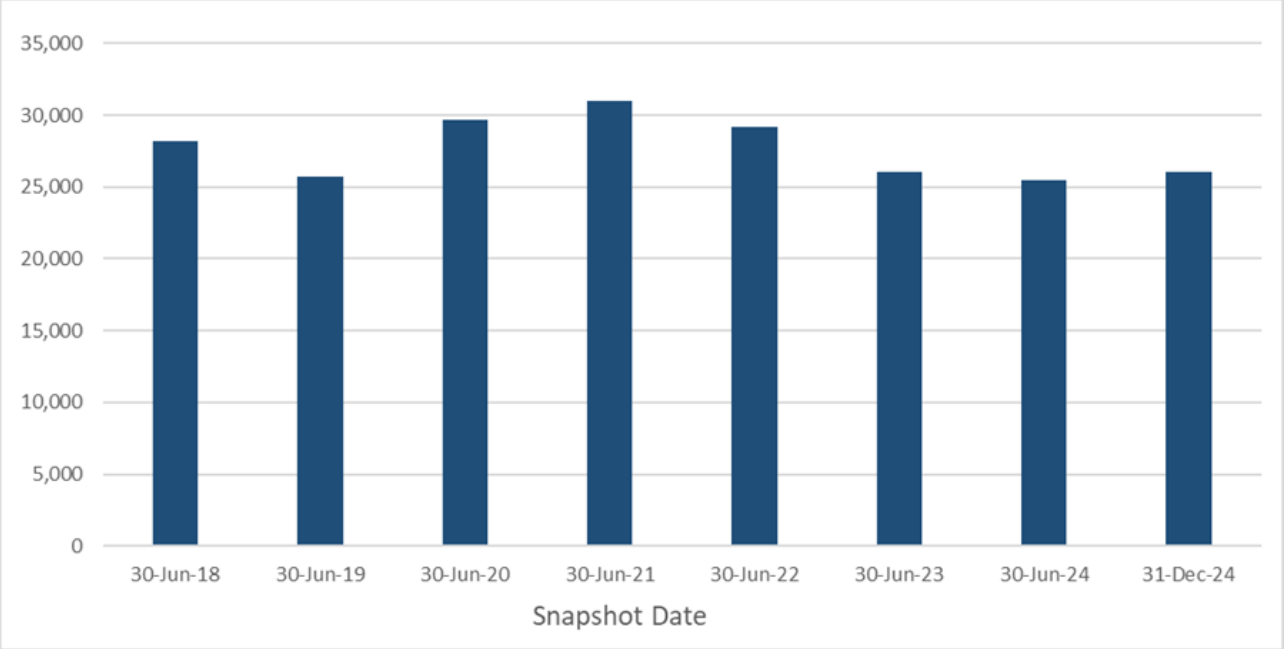
Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Bridging E (subclass 050) visas (BVE)

317. 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 19 Number of Bridging E visa holders in Australia, 30 June 2018 to 31 December 2024[23]



Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Status Resolution Support Services

318. The Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program provides targeted, needs based support to eligible individuals while they engage with the Department to resolve their immigration status, either through the grant of a substantive visa or departure from Australia. Types of support services provided depend on an individual's circumstances and may include financial, short-term accommodation, access to health care, caseworker support, and access to education for school-aged children.

[23] Includes Bridging E visa (subclasses 050 and 051)

Table 27 Status Resolution Support Services recipients, as at 31 December 2024

	30 June 2022	30 June 2023	30 June 2024	31 December 2024
Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals (UMAs)	895	803	632	661
Non-UMAs	711	738	1,063	1,428
Total	**1,606**	**1,541**	**1,695**	**2,089**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Leaving the Status Resolution program

319. 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 28 Departures from Australia of Status Resolution clients, as at 2020–21 to 2024–25 (31 December 2024)

Departures from Australia	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Returns from community	9,801	7,221	6,268	5,178	2,248
Removals from immigration detention	1,041	1,268	2,317	2,764	1,698
Total	**10,842**	**8,489**	**8,585**	**7,942**	**3,946**

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Return and Reintegration Assistance Program (RRAP)

320. The Return and Reintegration Assistance Program (RRAP) assists eligible non-citizens to voluntarily leave Australia or a regional processing country, but who require assistance to do so. By facilitating voluntary departure, the RRAP assists individuals finalise their immigration status.

321. The RRAP provides two streams of support:

- Returns assistance facilitates the departure process for eligible non-citizens. Returns Assistance includes (but is not limited to) returns counselling, purchasing air tickets, assistance to obtain travel documents, accommodation assistance, small cash allowances during transit and reception assistance in the country of return.
- Reintegration assistance delivers support enabling eligible non-citizens to rebuild their lives in the return country and aims to reduce the risk of further irregular migration.

Table 29 RRAP returns, 2020–2021 to 2024–25 (to 31 December 2024)

Returns	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Returns	541	309	317	340	176

Source: **Department of Home Affairs, 2025**

Management of transitory persons

322. As at 31 December 2024, there were 927 transitory persons in the regional processing cohort residing temporarily in Australia.

323. 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.

324. Transitory persons remain in detention until they are released under residence determination or on a bridging visa through ministerial intervention, or otherwise depart Australia.

325. 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 voluntary return home or to another country to which they have right of entry.

326. As at 31 December 2024, 1,432 (from 452 Nauru, 472 PNG, 508 Australia) resettlement outcomes have been achieved for transitory persons, including 1,109 to the United States and 219 to New Zealand.

END OF DOCUMENT