



Priorities for change

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Justice for Refugees SA: Policy Priorities for 2022	Points to consider
<p>✦ Replacing Temporary Protection Visas with a pathway to permanency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All people seeking asylum want a safe place to live permanently so they can care for their children and have a chance to rebuild their lives free from danger. • It is legal under international law to seek asylum. It is an issue of basic human rights. Australians can and should give people seeking asylum this opportunity. • In many of the home countries from which refugees and people seeking asylum have been forced to flee, there is no process to apply for a visa. This is most clearly demonstrated by the current situation in Afghanistan under the Taliban. • The current system of Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) do not provide a clear pathway to permanency. The lack of a pathway to permanency prolongs uncertainty, psychological distress and financial insecurity. There are approximately 24,500 refugees in Australia who face uncertainty about their future which adds to pre-existing trauma. • Temporary visas make all aspects of life more difficult – security of employment, accessing social security and health support and access to further education. A more effective pathway to permanency will provide refugees with the means to rebuild their lives and contribute as members of the Australian community. Australian history provides many previous examples of refugees making Australia an economically stronger, fairer and culturally richer society.
<p>✦ Improving access to tertiary education for refugees and people seeking asylum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thriving economy needs a skilled workforce. Tertiary education is a way to enable people seeking asylum to contribute significantly to the Australian economy. The Australian Government currently requires those on temporary visas to pay international student fees to study at a tertiary level. These fees are prohibitively expensive – designed for an overseas market of students with greater financial resources. This excludes most people seeking asylum. • The Australian Government has the power to extend to refugees and people seeking asylum a tertiary education fee structure similar to that of domestic students. This would be a more effective use of human resources to benefit the Australian economy. Such a policy change would contribute to their wellbeing and maximise their contribution to the community as they prosper and thrive. • The University of Adelaide offers refugee scholarships. Some other tertiary institutions also provide scholarships. The retention and success of graduates of these programs demonstrate the importance of widening such opportunities. • Our country is currently experiencing a significant shortage of skilled workers. We should be allowing refugees and people seeking asylum, who are already living in Australia, the opportunity to reach their full potential by pursuing tertiary studies.



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<p>✦ Increasing Australia’s humanitarian, family reunion and refugee intake overall, as well as increasing the intake from Afghanistan to 20,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research by the Refugee Council of Australia indicates that Australia’s refugee program is the lowest it has been in 45 years. The global number of refugees is increasing. We need to provide commensurate assistance. • Recently the number of visas for people seeking asylum from Afghanistan has increased from 3,000 to 31,500 over a 4-year period. 145,000 applications have been lodged however to date no visas have yet to be processed. • There has been no cap on visas allocated to refugees from the current conflict in Ukraine. Refugees from Ukraine will enter Australia on visitor visas and then be eligible for a 3-year temporary Humanitarian Visa. This has not been offered to any other refugee groups. • Increased resources to expedite approval process for refugee status, and pathways to permanency, would assist in matching Australia’s humanitarian commitment with the need.
<p>✦ Ending indefinite offshore and onshore detention for refugees and people seeking asylum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is now time to end offshore detention and closed detention in Australia. Detention is not the way we would want to be treated if we were seeking asylum. It was also initiated by historical circumstances that are no longer relevant. • For many people seeking asylum from unsafe conditions, there is no process to seek a visa to leave their home country. It is a basic human right to seek asylum and it is not illegal to do so. • The problem of maritime arrivals has been addressed due to boat turn-backs. The policy of the current Australian Government relating to offshore detention of people assessed as refugees, but who arrived by boat, contravenes the 1951 Refugee Convention to which Australia is a signatory. • Damage to the psychological and physical wellbeing of people held indefinitely in detention is documented by health professionals. • Maintaining the current policy is economically wasteful when considering the contributions that refugees make to the Australian economy. • Research has shown that offshore detention is not economically viable. The Department of Home Affairs’ own 2021 figures showed that significantly more than \$573,000 per person per year was being spent keeping an individual in offshore detention. According to figures contained in the Home Affairs Budget portfolio statements for 2021-22, the budgeted expenses for offshore detention amount to \$812 million this financial year. With a current occupancy rate of 219 people across PNG and Nauru, the amount per detainee is approximately \$3.7 million dollars.