



Refugee Council
of Australia

**THE 2009-10 BUDGET IN BRIEF:
What it means for refugees and those requiring
humanitarian protection**

KEY CHANGES AT A GLANCE

Complementary Protection to be introduced
Reforms to employment restrictions for asylum seekers
Community Care and Community Status Resolution Pilots to be national programs
Expansion and redevelopment of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre
Four-year planning framework introduced for Refugee and Humanitarian Program
Modest increase to Woman at Risk quota
Core funding increase to UNHCR
Various border and regional security measures
Funding cut to AMEP, alongside increased service provision
Funding cut to DIAC

ONSHORE RECEPTION AND PROCESSING OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

- \$4.8 million will be allocated over four years, from within the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) existing budget, for the introduction of a system of complementary protection for people to whom Australia has *non-refoulement* (non-return) obligations under international human rights treaties other than the 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The system will establish a visa pathway, through the Protection Visa process, for *non-refoulement* applicants. Review rights and visa conditions will be aligned with those under the current refugee status determination system. The funding allocation will include coverage of IT changes and training requirements.
- \$5.4 million will be allocated over four years for changes to restrictions on work rights and Medicare benefits for asylum seekers. Since 1997, asylum seekers who lodged their applications for a protection visa after having spent 45 days or more in Australia during the previous 12 months have been denied the right to work and access to Medicare. The new policy will link these benefits to asylum seekers' compliance with the Migration Act. \$5.2 million of the allocation will go to the Department of Health and Ageing and \$0.1 million each to Medicare Australia and to DIAC.
- \$77.4 million will be allocated over four years for implementation of measures related to the Government's 'New Directions in Immigration Detention' policy, announced by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship in July 2008. This will involve the expansion of

the Community Care Pilot (introduced in 2006) and Community Status Resolution Pilot (introduced in 2007) into national programs. The \$77.4 million allocation for the new Community Status Resolution Service and Assisted Voluntary Return Service will be funded by cost savings in immigration detention services (savings resulting from the reduction in numbers of people detained).

REFUGEE AND SPECIAL HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM INTAKE

- As forecast in the 2008-09 Budget, there has been a modest overall increase of 250 places to a total of 13,750 under the 2009-10 Refugee and Humanitarian Program intake. This comprises 6,000 places under the Refugee component and 7,750 places (up by 750 places) under the Special Humanitarian component. The Woman at Risk quota has been increased from 10.5% to 12% of the Refugee component.
- Funding has been carried over for the measure announced in the 2008-09 Budget to protect former locally engaged Iraqis who are potentially at risk as a consequence of their employment by the Australian government. This will allow for the processing of the approximately 100 visas yet to be granted from within the 600 visas originally allocated for this caseload.
- A four-year planning framework will be introduced, allowing government to make longer-term commitments to resettling refugees in protracted crisis situations. The intake figures and composition will still go to Cabinet annually.
- The resettlement focus will continue to be on refugees from the three key regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

GENERAL MIGRATION PROGRAM

- The general migration program will decrease by 21,600 places to an overall allocation of 168,700 places in 2009-10. The skilled stream will decrease by 25,400 places to a total of 108,100. The family stream will be increased by 3,800 places to a total allocation of 60,300.

IMMIGRATION DETENTION

- \$186.3 million has been allocated for the redevelopment of the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (VIDC) over five years. This will cover design, community consultation processes, operational planning, tender documentation, construction, and final fit-out and commissioning. The redevelopment will include construction of a larger, purpose-built high-security unit and refurbishment of other areas. It is envisaged that the overall capacity of VIDC will increase from 328 beds to a general operating capacity of 400 and a surge capacity of 728. The refurbishment will be managed by the Department of Finance and overseen by a joint Finance and DIAC steering committee.

DIAC OPERATIONS

- DIAC's overall budget will decrease by 3.7%, to \$1.789 billion. It will be required to save \$120.6 million over a four-year period through a range of efficiency improvements, to be achieved via: removal of duplication in service provision; reduced expenditure on consultants (except in the area of IT); tightened contract pricing; and expansion of eHealth (the electronic lodgement of health reports and documents). It is anticipated that there will be a 400 position reduction in personnel over 2009-10 (following a period of significant growth following the Palmer and Comrie reports).

- \$34.8 million will be dedicated to supporting and maintaining the Systems for People IT program, initiated in 2006 in response to the limitations in information systems identified within the Palmer and Comrie Reports.
- \$24.4 million over four years will be allocated for the establishment and management of the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority within DIAC, replacing the Migration Agents Registration Authority currently located within the Migration Institute of Australia. The funding will incorporate \$4 million of existing MARA assets. The new OMARA will be supported by an advisory body comprising diverse stakeholders.

SETTLEMENT AND ASSOCIATED SERVICES

- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) will have its projected funding scaled back by \$20.4 million over four years, with projected savings to be achieved through efficiencies rather than cuts in service delivery. Its service scope will be expanded to include provision for counselling for all students and an increase in client eligibility to include young people aged 15-17 years who have dropped out of school within their first year in Australia.
- The Citizenship Support Grants program will be abolished, representing a saving of \$15.8 million projected over four years. The grants were introduced to provide assistance in relation to the citizenship test. Some forms of citizenship test assistance will remain available through DIAC and AMEP.
- Application fees for citizenship will be increased by around 10% for people born outside Australia from 1 July 2009. This measure was announced in the last budget and is expected to increase revenue by \$13.8 million over four years.

BORDER AND REGIONAL SECURITY MEASURES

Over \$1.3 billion will be allocated over six years, across portfolio areas, to combat people smuggling and to strengthen national security. This will involve a range of measures, including:

1. At least \$593 million on offshore measures to strengthen regional engagement with neighbouring countries and international organisations, including:
 - Over \$500 million over four years for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to help build the capacity of law enforcement agencies in the Solomon Islands (\$438.8 million), Indonesia (\$26.7 million), Pakistan (\$18.8 million) and Africa (\$2.7 million for Sudan and \$17.2 million elsewhere).
 - \$42 million to AFP to stop people smuggling ventures before they launch for Australia, through partnership activities with Indonesian police authorities and through assignment of additional officers to the AFP People Smuggling Strike team.
 - \$14 million over four years to Customs and Border protection to strengthen engagement in critical transit countries for people smuggling activities, including establishing new posts in Malaysia and Sri Lanka.
 - \$14.3 million over two years for the Regional Cooperation Arrangements in Indonesia, including via funding to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) to provide care to unauthorised arrivals intercepted in Indonesia.
 - \$16.4 million over two years to address irregular population flows throughout Asia region, including via:

- development of a regional framework for management and resolution of status of asylum seekers and “irregular migrants” in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM;
 - a secondee to UNHCR;
 - funding for UNHCR to undertake regional advocacy to encourage countries to become signatories to the Refugee Convention;
 - increased evidence-based research, monitoring and analysis of irregular migration information;
 - deployment of officers to Jakarta, Hanoi, Colombo, Kuala Lumpur and Dubai to enhance liaison.
- \$12.6 million over four years to continue engagement with Asia-Pacific countries to strengthen their capacity to curb terrorist and other irregular trans-border movements, via training and technical advice in document fraud detection and immigration intelligence.
 - \$13.6 million to strengthen legal prosecution capacity and enhance regional collaboration on people smuggling.
2. \$440 million on border and airport surveillance and security measures on Australian territory, including:
 - \$324 million to increase maritime patrol and surveillance, including \$22 million over four years to establish a dedicated capability in Customs and Border Protection to tow and dispose of intercepted vessels;
 - \$63 million for increased aerial surveillance, including \$16 million for two extra aircraft;
 - \$53 million for increased security at major airports.
 3. Almost \$290 million to boost international counter-terrorism and counter proliferation and increase national security engagement with key international partners
 4. \$17 million on anti-smuggling assistance in Australia, including:
 - \$4 million over two years for a counter people smuggling information campaign;
 - \$2 million over two years to the Attorney General’s Department to improve Australia’s capacity to extradite people smugglers to face prosecution and to provide regional assistance with strengthening anti-people smuggling laws;
 - \$11 million to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to prosecute people smuggling offences.

OVERSEAS AID AND MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE

- Australia’s core contribution to the UNHCR will increase to \$14.3 million (up from \$9.9 million in 2008-9, and returning to the level of 2000-1). Funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) will increase to \$5.2 million. The International Refugee Fund will receive no funding this year (following a \$15 million allocation in the last budget).
- Australia’s total aid budget will increase by 5.6% to \$3.8 billion. This translates to 0.34% of Gross National Income (GNI), up marginally from 0.32% in 2008-09, but down 0.1% on the forecast for 2009-10 set out in the previous budget. Government retains its

commitment to achieving an aid allocation of 0.5% of GNI by 2015-16. The UN recommended aid allocation is 0.7% of GNI.

- Most of the aid budget is delivered by AusAID. DIAC is one of five other major government agencies delivering a component of the aid budget, and in 2009-10 will deliver \$10.5 million of the overall allocation. The Attorney General's Department will deliver \$210.3 million (including \$205.4 million through the Australian Federal Police), and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will deliver \$29.2 million.
- The Humanitarian Emergency and Refugee Program component of the aid budget has decreased by \$19.8 million to \$299.8 million.
- The Human Rights Fund has been allocated \$5.8 million for 2009-10 (up from \$4 million in the last financial year). \$1.9 million of this allocation will go to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and protect human rights in the Asia Pacific region.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross will receive \$16 million (up from around \$14 million).
- There has been a 42.5% increase to \$163.9 million in the overall aid allocation to Africa.
- There has been a 54.3% decrease to \$224.5 million in the overall aid allocation to Central Asia and the Middle East. Within this region, the allocation for Pakistan has increased by 95.1% to \$58.8 million, while the allocation for Afghanistan has reduced by 26.7% to \$88.7 million, and the allocation for Iraq has reduced by 85.6% to \$44.7 million.
- There has been a 33.7% increase to \$149.9 million in the overall aid allocation to South Asia. This includes: a 156% increase to \$13.7 million to India; a 95% increase to \$15.8 million to Nepal; a 51.8% increase to \$4.8 million to Bhutan; and a 33.5% increase to Sri Lanka to \$35.6 million.
- There has been a 4.6% increase to \$1.07 billion in the overall aid allocation to East Asia, including an 82.9% increase to \$29.1 million to Burma.
- There has been a 12.2% increase to \$676.6 million in the overall aid allocation to the Pacific, and a 7.7% increase to \$414.3 million in the overall aid allocation to PNG.

BROADER HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES

- The Australian Human Rights Commission has had a modest budget increase to \$17.79 million, up from \$17.635 million.