

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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ON TEMPORARY PROTECTION VISAS

September 2000

On 13th October 1999 the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs announced that unauthorised arrivals who are successful in their applications for refugee status in Australia will no longer be granted permanent residence but instead given a three year temporary entry visa (Visa Subclass 785). After three years, they will have to apply again for refugee status. Asylum seekers who arrived lawfully will still be granted permanent residence visas (Visa Subclass 866). Two classes of refugees have thus been created and both have very different entitlements:

	Permanent Visa	Temporary Visa
Social Security	Immediate access to the full range of social security benefits	Access only to Special Benefits for which a range of eligibility criteria apply.
Education	Same access to education as any other permanent resident.	Access to school education subject to state policy. Effective preclusion from tertiary education due to imposition of full fees.
Settlement Support	Access to full range of DIMA settlement support services	Level of access is not yet defined.
Family Reunion	Able to bring members of immediate family (spouse and children) to Australia.	No family reunion rights (including reunion with spouse and children).
Work Rights	Permission to work.	Permission to work but ability to find employment influenced by temporary nature of visa.
Language Training	Access to 510 hours of English language training.	No clarity yet regarding entitlements.
Medical Benefits	Automatic eligibility for Medicare.	Eligibility for Medicare subject to lodgement of application for a permanent visa.
Travel	Will be able to leave the country and return without jeopardising their visa.	No automatic right of return.

The vast majority of people being granted TPVs at this time are from Iraq and Afghanistan. The remainder are from many countries including Somalia, Iraq, Algeria and Kuwait.

Large numbers of TPVs holders are currently being released from detention centres. It is probable that over 4,000 will be released by the end of the year. Most are coming out of the three main detention centres: Port Hedland and Curtin (at Derby) in Western Australia and Woomera in South Australia. They are taken by bus to various cities around the country. The majority have thus far been taken to: Adelaide Perth Brisbane.

Increasing numbers are being taken to Melbourne and small numbers to Darwin, Hobart and Canberra. Those from the three big detention centres are not being brought directly to Sydney but many are relocating to Sydney on their own initiative. In addition, in Sydney we are also seeing TPV holders who have been released from Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. These come from a far greater range of countries, though many are from the Middle East.

Because TPV holders are not eligible for most existing settlement support services, new services are having to be put in place for them. In many instances, these are being provided by church agencies and most are using volunteer labour. The most pressing needs identified for TPV holders are affordable accommodation, access to English classes and access to employment. In addition, many TPV holders are deeply distressed by their inability to be reunited with their families.

In most states networks of supporters for TPV holders are evolving. Contact with these networks can be made through:

- Adelaide: Monica Leahy - SA Department of Human Services - 08 8226 6131
- Kevin Liston - Australian Refugee Association - 08 8354 2951
- Perth: ASeTTS (torture and trauma service) - 09 8325 6272
- Eira Clapton - CARAD - PO Box 831 Scarborough WA 6922 - 08 9385 5477
- Brisbane: Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care - 07 3876 3294
- QPAST (torture and trauma service) - 07 3391 6677
- ACT: Office of Multicultural Affairs - 02 6205 0324
- NSW: STARTTS - 44 Auburn Rd, Auburn - 02 9646 6666
- Asylum Seekers Centre - 38 Nobbs St, Surry Hills 2010 - 02 9361 5606