



Refugee Council  
of Australia

## **2019-20 FEDERAL BUDGET: WHAT IT MEANS FOR REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION**

### **KEY POINTS:**

- *The Morrison Government has signalled its intention to repeal the legislation which enables medical professionals to recommend seriously ill refugees be evacuated from Nauru and Manus Island for medical attention in Australia. The Government says it intends to repeal the legislation by 1 July 2019 and will then close the recently reopened Christmas Island detention centre.*
- *Refugee and humanitarian entrants will be exempted from Jobactive employment services for the first 12 months after arrival in Australia. This doubles the extension period (previously six months) but the \$77.9 million the Government expects to save from this measure will not be invested in other forms of employment assistance for refugees.*
- *The Government has savagely cut its allocation for financial support for people seeking asylum by more than 60% in just two years, from \$139.8 million in 2017-18 to \$52.6 million in 2019-20.*

### **CUTS TO ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT**

The Government will drastically reduce funding for payments to people seeking asylum under the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS). The SRSS program provides a vital lifeline for people awaiting an outcome on their asylum application, and cuts will force people further into destitution. Funding for asylum seeker support within the Department of Human Services shows that the program will be reduced by more than 60% in just two years, from the \$139.8 million spent in 2017-18 to just \$52.6 million in 2019-20. At the same time, many people are still awaiting a final outcome on their application through the fast track process for almost five years and the number of people who have arrived by plane on temporary visas and sought asylum in Australia has increased substantially. The Government has estimated that it will spend \$93.4 million on asylum seeker support in 2018-19. This figure is 24% lower than the \$122.9 million allocated in the 2018-19 Budget.

### **COST BLOWOUTS IN DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

While the asylum seeker support allocation has been underspent by \$29.5 million in 2018-19, a comparison between forecast spending and actual spending in 2018-19 shows massive blowouts in many areas of the Department of Home Affairs budget. These include a cost blowout of \$397.7 million in the Department's offshore detention spending, \$172.3 million in Onshore Detention and Compliance, \$71.1 million in the Visas division and \$54.0 million in Border Enforcement.

### **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR REFUGEES**

The Government will save \$77.9 million over four years from 2019-20 by delaying the mandatory employment servicing arrangement for newly arrived refugees. Currently, refugees are not required to undergo Jobactive arrangements for the first six months of settlement. This period will be increased to 12 months. While this is welcome news for refugees who continue to report frustration with the inadequate Jobactive services, it is disappointing that this money will not be put into a specialised employment service for refugees. Newly arrived refugees will still be able to opt into Jobactive on a voluntary basis before 12 months.

### **OFFSHORE DETENTION ARRANGEMENTS — CHRISTMAS ISLAND**

The Government plans to repeal the Medevac Legislation (Home Affairs Legislation Amendment [Miscellaneous Measures] Act 2019), which was introduced to ensure people in offshore detention are brought to Australia if they require medical treatment. The Government intends to repeal the

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legislation by 1 July 2019 and bring those detained on Christmas Island back to Nauru or Papua New Guinea. The Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre, which was reopened in February after the passing of the Medevac legislation at a cost of \$178.9 million, will be closed on 1 July 2019 and returned to a contingency setting.

Further funding under the Medevac arrangements include:

- *\$3.2 million to increase the Australian Federal Police's presence on Christmas Island;*
- *\$3.0 million to reinforce Operation Sovereign Border's offshore strategic communications campaign; and*
- *\$8.0 million in 2018-19 for the establishment of an Independent Health Advice Panel to monitor, assess and report on the physical and mental health of transitory persons who are in regional processing countries and the standard of health services provided to them. No funding has been allocated for the Panel in 2019-20.*

## **REGIONAL COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT IN INDONESIA**

The Government will provide an additional \$39.5 million in 2019-20 to continue funding for the Regional Cooperation Arrangement (RCA) in Indonesia. This represents a 137% increase from last year's budget.

## **OFFSHORE PROCESSING**

The Government expects to reduce offshore processing costs by 54%, down to \$526 million in 2019-20. However, the Government's offshore processing costs blew out by 52% during 2018-19. In the 2018-19 Budget, forecast spending on offshore processing was \$760 million but the 2019-20 Budget records that estimated actual spending in 2018-19 on offshore processing will be \$1.158 billion.

## **IMMIGRATION DETENTION AND COMPLIANCE IN AUSTRALIA**

The Government plans to continue to spend over \$1 billion each year over the next four years for onshore detention and related compliance measures for people seeking asylum in Australia. This highlights a continued policy commitment to indefinite mandatory detention.

## **SAFER COMMUNITIES FUND**

The Government will provide \$58.2 million over four years from 2019-20 to increase funding available under the Safer Communities Fund. The program provides grant funding to local government and community organisations to address crime and anti-social behaviour, including those who face a risk of attack, harassment or violence stemming from racial or religious intolerance.

## **SOCIAL COHESION PACKAGES**

The Government will provide \$27.2 million over four years from 2018-19 for a package of initiatives to foster belonging and break down barriers to social and economic participation for Australian immigrants, and create stronger communities. This includes:

- *\$12.6 million over three years from 2019-20 to establish the Community Languages Multicultural Grants Program, to support community language schools and connect young Australians to the language, heritage and culture of their community;*
- *\$7.3 million over three years from 2018-19 to continue the Fostering Integration Grants Program, to support community organisations to assist newly-arrived migrants to integrate into Australian society;*
- *\$1.8 million over two years from 2018-19 for digital engagement initiatives to counter extremism online.*

The Government will also provide an additional \$22.6 million over four years from 2019-20 to expand and extend the National Community Hubs Program (NCHP) and establish the National Youth Hubs Program (NYHP). The measure will expand the NCHP network to an additional 32 sites, taking the total to 100, and provide funding on an ongoing basis. The measure will also establish 25 NYHP sites which will provide services targeted at the needs of young people. The expanded network of Community and Youth Hubs will provide migrants with access to services, support and learning opportunities, which will assist with integrating with the Australian community and in improving employment outcomes

## REDUCTION IN MIGRATION PROGRAM

The Government will reduce the planning level of the Migration Program from 190,000 to 160,000 places for four years from 2019-20. For the 2019-20 Migration Program, there will be 108,682 places in the Skill stream, 47,732 places in the Family stream, with a combined 3,586 places for Child and Special Eligibility streams. The Refugee and Humanitarian Program is separate to this and will remain at its 2018-19 level of 18,750 places.

## NEW REGIONAL SKILLED MIGRATION VISAS

From November 2019, the Government will introduce two new regional visas: the Skilled Work Regional Visa and the Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Visa. Both of these will require migrants to live and work in regional for five years. The two regional visas respectively replace the existing subclass 187 visa and subclass 489 visa. This will later be followed by the Permanent Residence Visa for regional Australia in November of 2022.

## SKILLS MIGRATION POINTS TEST

From November 2019, the Skilled Migration Points Test will be adjusted to award additional points to primary applicants when their partner has competent English but does not meet the existing requirements for skilled partner points. Single applicants will also be awarded additional points to ensure they are not disadvantaged. These changes will prioritise applicants who are single or whose partner can demonstrate competent English. This will disadvantage applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds, including, for example, refugees on Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) who might become eligible to apply for Skilled Migration visas if they satisfy the SHEV pathways requirements.

## SETTLEMENT SERVICES

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will spend \$207.1 million on settlement services in 2019-20. This is a 2% reduction on estimated actual spending in 2018-19 of \$211 million (which was 6% higher than the \$199 million forecast in the 2018-19 Budget).

## ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAM

The Department of Education and Training has allocated \$259 million for the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in 2019-20, a 0.2% increase on estimated actual spending in 2018-19. The \$258.4 million spent on AMEP in 2018-19 was 15% lower than the \$303.6 million forecast in the Government's 2018-19 Budget.

## SPENDING IN 2019-20 BUDGET

### DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

1. BORDER ENFORCEMENT	2018-19 (estimated actual)	2019-20	2020-21	2021-2022	2022-23
<b>1.1 Border Enforcement</b>	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Departmental expenses	1,103,924	1,153,873	1,032,883	1,009,076	1,005,697
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,103,924</b>	<b>1,153,873</b>	<b>1,032,883</b>	<b>1,009,076</b>	<b>1,005,697</b>
<b>1.2 Border Management</b>					
External expenses	8	8	8	8	8
Departmental expenses	283,954	300,625	289,165	292,333	294,330
<b>Total</b>	<b>283,962</b>	<b>300,633</b>	<b>289,173</b>	<b>292,341</b>	<b>294,338</b>
<b>1.3 Onshore Compliance and Detention</b>					
External expenses	872,273	718,298	676,958	659,370	663,370
Departmental expenses	457,930	414,096	395,965	394,373	397,814
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,330,203</b>	<b>1,132,394</b>	<b>1,072,923</b>	<b>1,053,743</b>	<b>1,061,184</b>
<b>1.4 IMA Offshore Management</b>					
External expenses	1,120,982	493,775	373,230	379,333	386,301

Departmental expenses	36,538	31,871	31,745	31,766	31,743
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,157,520</b>	<b>525,646</b>	<b>404,975</b>	<b>411,099</b>	<b>418,044</b>
<b>1.5 Regional Cooperation</b>					
External expenses	70,401	67,846	29,090	29,759	30,503
Departmental expenses	20,119	20,003	16,281	16,127	16,059
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,520</b>	<b>87,849</b>	<b>45,371</b>	<b>45,886</b>	<b>46,562</b>
<b>2. CITIZENSHIP, MIGRATION, VISAS, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE</b>					
	<b>2018-19 (estimated actual)</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>2.1 Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship</b>					
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
External expenses	9,727	12,722	5,425	428	436
Departmental expenses	77,252	77,530	79,893	78,037	79,873
<b>Total</b>	<b>86,979</b>	<b>90,252</b>	<b>85,318</b>	<b>78,465</b>	<b>80,309</b>
<b>2.2 Migration</b>					
Departmental expenses	301,601	278,396	263,040	253,420	258,304
<b>Total</b>	<b>301,601</b>	<b>278,396</b>	<b>263,040</b>	<b>253,420</b>	<b>258,304</b>
<b>2.3 Visas</b>					
Departmental expenses	480,497	438,763	380,484	375,074	379,622
<b>Total</b>	<b>480,497</b>	<b>438,763</b>	<b>380,484</b>	<b>375,074</b>	<b>379,622</b>
<b>2.4 Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance</b>					
External expenses	42,711	42,328	41,932	41,771	42,473
Departmental expenses	124,156	121,399	105,895	106,319	107,581
<b>Total</b>	<b>166,867</b>	<b>163,727</b>	<b>147,827</b>	<b>148,090</b>	<b>150,054</b>

## SETTLEMENT RELATED PROGRAMS IN OTHER PORTFOLIOS

<b>DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>2018-19 (estimated actual)</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>2.1 Families and Communities</b>					
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Settlement Services	211,003	207,077	206,964	207,477	214,098
<b>Total</b>	<b>211,003</b>	<b>207,077</b>	<b>206,964</b>	<b>207,477</b>	<b>214,098</b>

<b>DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>	<b>2018-19 (estimated actual)</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>2.8.3 Access to Training</b>					
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Adult Migrant English Program	258,418	259,011	256,065	254,358	257,541
Skills for Education and Employment Program	93,153	88,964	91,092	93,960	124,815
Foundation Skills for Your Future	-	7,139	14,283	14,283	14,283
Remote Communities Pilot - Foundation Skills for Your Future	-	1,622	3,290	3,336	-

<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES</b>	<b>2018-19 (estimated actual)</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>Payments on behalf of Dept of Home Affairs</b>					
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Asylum Seeker Support	93,372	52,649			