



Refugee Council
of Australia

2021-22 FEDERAL BUDGET: WHAT IT MEANS FOR REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION

KEY POINTS:

- *A cost blowout in onshore detention and compliance, with over \$1.279 billion spent in one year*
- *The continuation of the ceiling of 13,750 places for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, with this cut from previous years to be maintained until 2024-25*
- *A welcome but unexplained increase in the allocation for settlement support next year following an underspend of settlement services funding for this year*
- *Increased funding to address the backlog of cases within the Migration and Refugee Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal*
- *Funding to support refugee women and other migrant women's safety and social and economic inclusion if they are survivors of family violence*

REFUGEE AND HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

The Australian Government will maintain the Humanitarian Program at 13,750 places in 2021-22 and over the forward estimates to 2024-25, and the size of the program will remain as a ceiling rather than a target. Until 2018-19, Australia always met or slightly exceeded its target for the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. The ceiling — and the ceiling not being met — is a departure from Australia's previous practice. The Coalition Government previously had a target of 18,750 humanitarian places in 2019-20.

As of 12 February 2021, 6,095 people who have been granted permanent visas under the Humanitarian Program have been unable to travel and settle in Australia. Estimates of another 4,000 visa grants to be made by the end of the financial year will mean that there will be roughly 10,000 humanitarian visa holders overseas by July 2021.

ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Funding for people seeking asylum who are assisted financially under the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) Program will decrease slightly from a total of \$35.1 million this year to an estimated \$33.3 million next year. The allocation this year was more than forecasted in the last budget (up from the estimated \$19.6 million) but still a cut from past years, reduced from \$139.8 million in 2017-18, to \$93.4 million in 2018-19 and \$39.5 million in 2019-20.

OFFSHORE PROCESSING

The Government has allocated \$811.8 million to offshore management for the next year. There are currently 239 people remaining offshore, with 109 people on Nauru and 130 in PNG. This brings this Government's budget allocation to a total of \$8.3 billion for offshore processing, including more than \$2 billion in cost blowouts, between 2014 and 2020.

DETERRENCE AND INTERCEPTION MEASURES

The Government will spend \$7.7 million over two years to continue the Airline Liaison Officer Program to disrupt international travel to Australia. Airline liaison officers are used, among other things, to spot any passengers who they think might claim asylum and prevent them from boarding.

The Government will spend \$14.2 million in 2021-22 to develop the plan for its Future Maritime Surveillance and Response Capability and the "next generation civil maritime surveillance and response capabilities, which will enable us to deter, detect and respond to civil maritime threats and to protect Australia's borders". This surveillance and response includes but is not limited to disrupting and returning boats carrying people seeking asylum.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Government will spend \$38.1 million in 2021-22 to continue the Regional Cooperation Arrangement in Indonesia as part of Operation Sovereign Borders. This is a reduction of \$3.3 million from last year's budget, in line with the Government's commitment to reduce its support for refugees stranded in Indonesia due to

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is the national umbrella body
for refugees, people seeking asylum
and the organisations and individuals
who support them • Founded 1981

Australia's turn-back policies. In 2017 the Australian Government announced that it would cease funding for any additional refugees in Indonesia seeking the assistance of the International Organization for Migration. In total, the Government will spend \$104.4 million on regional cooperation to deter people seeking asylum, which includes cooperation with other third countries to disrupt onward journeys of people seeking asylum.

ONSHORE DETENTION AND COMPLIANCE

Funding for onshore detention and compliance will cost Australians \$1.279 billion, a cost blowout of over \$212 million in detention provider contracts.

The Government will spend \$464.7 million over two years from 2020-21 to increase the capacity of the onshore Immigration Detention Network and to extend use of the North West Point Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island. Last year, the Government spent \$55.6 million to reactivate Christmas Island.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Government will spend \$54.8 million over four years from 2021-22 to address the backlog of cases within the Migration and Refugee Division (MRD) of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

As at 30 April 2021, there were 89,536 cases awaiting decision – 31,689 in the Refugee Division and 57,847 in the Migration Division. The Government will also provide an additional judge in the Federal Circuit Court in 2021-22, and a second judge in 2022-23.

MIGRATION PROGRAM

The Government will maintain the 2021-22 Migration Program planning level at 160,000 places. Family and Skill stream places will be maintained at their 2020-21 planning levels, with 79,600 places allocated to the Skill stream and 77,300 places to the Family stream. The Migration Program will have a continued focus on onshore visa applicants, including reducing the onshore Partner visa pipeline.

Student visa holders will be allowed to work more than 40 hours per fortnight, temporarily, if they are employed in tourism or hospitality sectors. Previously this measure only applied to students working in agriculture, health and aged care. Further measures have been introduced to assist farmers to find workers, including changes to the Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408).

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

This year saw a reduction of \$57.9 million in settlement services due to border closures and settlement funding tied to arrivals. However, there is an additional \$102.4 million allocated to settlement services for 2021-22, above the planned budget from last year. In October 2020, the Department budgeted \$471.3 million for the 2021-22 financial year for refugee settlement. However, this budget now allocates \$573.7 million for this coming financial year. The increased budget is not explained in the Budget papers.

The Government will introduce a new delivery model for the *Adult Migrant English Program* from 1 July 2023 to improve English language, employment and social cohesion outcomes for migrants by linking provider payments to student outcomes. The financial implications of this measure are not for publication due to "commercial sensitivities".

SOCIAL COHESION

The Government has introduced initiatives to support the victims of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence against women and children. This includes \$29.3 million over three years from 2021-22 to support refugee women and other migrant women's safety and social and economic inclusion. The Department of Home Affairs will establish new "visa support and coordination functions, via a dedicated domestic and family violence support team".

MENTAL HEALTH EARLY INTERVENTION

The Government has committed \$16.9 million to fund mental health early intervention support and preventative measures for migrants and multicultural communities and to address the cultural competence of the broader health workforce through the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and Mental Health Australia for their Embrace Framework.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Government spending on overseas humanitarian assistance remains largely unchanged. Funding for UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, remains the same at \$25 million per year. Australia's global humanitarian funding is focused on the Pacific and South East and South and West Asia. Development funding for the Middle East and North Africa as well as sub-Saharan Africa decreased again after significant decreases in both regions in the last budget.

SPENDING IN 2021-22 BUDGET – DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS	2020-21 (estd actual)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
1.5 Regional Cooperation	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
External expenses	70,436	67,189	29,589	30,122	30,785
Departmental expenses	38,381	37,240	37,520	37,654	37,841
Total	108,817	104,429	67,109	67,776	68,626
2.1 Migration					
Departmental expenses	296,970	308,145	275,274	262,468	311,010
Total	296,970	308,145	275,274	262,468	311,010
2.2 Visas					
External expenses	0	0	0	0	0
Departmental expenses	441,705	395,490	355,404	344,629	393,882
Total	441,705	395,490	355,404	344,629	393,882
2.3 Refugee, Humanitarian, Settlement and Migrant Services					
External expenses	428,963	573,680	479,210	440,172	457,906
Departmental expenses	181,972	165,944	167,804	168,893	169,788
Total	610,935	739,624	647,014	609,065	627,694
2.4 IMA Offshore Management					
External expenses	757,279	771,855	268,291	262,678	268,351
Departmental expenses	61,500	39,981	41,032	41,219	41,534
Total	818,779	811,836	309,323	303,897	309,885
2.5 Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship					
External expenses	13,634	14,326	430	436	443
Departmental expenses	104,128	115,115	93,229	98,940	94,757
Total	117,762	129,441	93,659	99,376	95,200
3.2 Border Management					
External expenses	848	1,716	8	8	8
Departmental expenses	398,336	374,209	338,402	349,258	351,874
Total	399,184	375,925	338,410	349,266	351,882
3.4 Border Enforcement					
Departmental expenses	1,043,633	1,104,695	986,098	981,392	986,298
Total	1,043,633	1,104,695	986,098	981,392	986,298
3.5 Onshore Compliance and Detention					
External expenses	930,259	932,849	664,949	679,423	694,440
Departmental expenses	349,556	335,854	331,561	331,969	334,691
Total	1,279,815	1,268,703	996,510	1,011,392	1,029,131
SERVICES AUSTRALIA - PAYMENTS ON BEHALF OF DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS	2020-21 (estd actual)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Payments on behalf of Dept of Home Affairs	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Asylum Seeker Support	35,154	33,354	---	---	---