

MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday 21 March 2022

Refugee Council of Australia welcomes the Federal Government's decision to provide temporary humanitarian visas for Ukrainians

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of temporary humanitarian visas for Ukrainian people seeking safety in Australia.

"Enabling Ukrainian people to arrive in Australia and be protected in the short term is an appropriate response by the Australian Government and sets a positive precedent for what could happen in other situations where people are seeking refuge in our country," RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said.

"Ukrainians are being forced to flee their homes and country in circumstances where they continue to hold out the hope of safe return if peace can be restored. In this situation, allowing Ukrainians to enter Australia and transfer to three-year Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786) visas gives people hope and options. The visa enables Ukrainians temporarily in Australia to work or study and access Medicare while they wait to see what the future holds.

"This provides a constructive alternative to the Australian Government's usual approach of denying temporary access to Australia to people at risk of persecution. As a result, Ukrainians can enter Australia safely and more affordably, without the risk of detention or forced removal.

"While we welcome the government's approach to the situation in Ukraine, we are still highly concerned about the loss of more than 28,000 humanitarian visas over the past two years. The reduction of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program means that Australia is unable to respond appropriately to crises where there is no prospect of safe return and the need for permanent protection is urgent.

"That's why we are calling on the government to urgently increase the quota of humanitarian visas to be restored back to 2013 pre-election level of 20,000 places, as part of the 2022 Federal Budget as well as a special intake of 20,000 places for refugees from Afghanistan."

About RCOA: RCOA is the national umbrella body for refugees and people seeking asylum and those who support them. A non-profit organisation completely independent of government RCOA promotes more humane treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia, the region and globally. For further information and more detailed statistics on the cuts to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, see RCOA's [recent brief](#).

MEDIA: To arrange interviews contact our media team on 0488 035 535 or media@refugeecouncil.org.au