

2017 Resource Kit

refugee week 2017



with courage

Text COURAGE to 0439 222 777 to show your support for Refugees

let us all combine

refugee week 18-24 june 2017 | world refugee day 20 june 2017

Hani Abdile is a writer and spoken word poet from Somalia pictured with Ravi Prasad Project Founder of social catering enterprise Parliament on King. For more details go to www.refugeeweek.org.au. Photo credit: James Alcock/ROCA



Coordinated by



Refugee Council of Australia

Major Sponsors



Sponsors



Partners



Refugee Week 2017

Last year, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCA) hosted the biggest Refugee Week to date. The celebrations boasted over 350 events across the country in every state and territory. We saw a rich diversity of events, from film screenings to photography events, flash mobs and music festivals. The events brought tens of thousands of Australians together to acknowledge and celebrate the valuable contributions of refugees in Australia.

This year, Refugee Week is being celebrated from Sunday 18 June to Saturday 24 June. The Refugee Council of Australia is encouraging organisations to celebrate a unified Refugee Week based around the theme "With courage let us all combine".

This resource kit has been designed to help community organisations, event organisers and teachers to prepare for Refugee Week



Thanks to our sponsors for their generous support of Refugee Week 2017

Major Sponsors



Sponsors



Table of Contents

What is Refugee Week.....	4
Celebrating Courage.....	5
Planning an Event.....	8
Event Ideas.....	15
Background Information on Refugees.....	19
Teacher Resources.....	31
Sponsors.....	46

Background information on refugees

Who are refugees?

Until 1951 there was no commonly accepted term for people fleeing persecution. People who fled their country were known as stateless people, migrants or refugees. Different countries treated these people in different ways. Following the mass migrations caused by the Second World War (particularly in Europe), it was decided that there needed to be a common understanding of which people needed protection and how they should be protected.



1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (commonly known as the Refugee Convention), to which Australia is a signatory, defines a refugee as:

“

Any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.

”

The important parts of this definition are:

- The person has to be outside of their country of origin;
- The reason for their flight has to be a fear of persecution;
- The fear of persecution has to be well founded (i.e. they must have experienced it or be likely to experience if they return);
- The persecution has to result from one or more of the five grounds listed in the definition;
- They have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country.

The Refugee Convention definition is used by the Australian Government to determine whether our country has protection obligations towards a person seeking asylum. If someone who is seeking asylum is found to be a refugee, Australia is obliged under international law to offer protection and to ensure that the person is not sent back unwillingly to their country of origin. UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. Its purpose is to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of refugees and seek lasting solutions to their plight.

What have refugees experienced?

Refugees have a variety of experiences and every individual's 'refugee journey' is distinct. Most refugees have been confronted by deeply distressing and harrowing experiences and many have endured a range of physical, psychological and emotional traumas.

Common experiences of persecution include torture, beatings, rape, disappearance or killing of loved ones, imprisonment without trial, severe harassment by authorities, land confiscation, conflict-related injuries and months, years or even decades spent living in refugee camps or urban slums.

Refugees are rarely afforded the opportunity to make plans for their departure: to pack their belongings, to say farewell to their friends and families. In some cases, refugees are forced to flee with no notice, taking with them only the clothes on their backs. Others must keep their plans secrets in case they are discovered.

Refugees who arrive in Australia often have scant understanding about our country and the nature of society here. They have had no chance to prepare themselves both physically and psychologically for their new life in Australia.



Image: Celebrating the rich and diverse cultures of people from refugee background

Refugees in Australia

Australia has an extensive history of successfully resettling refugees and humanitarian entrants. Since Federation, Australia has welcomed more than 800,000 refugees and those in need of humanitarian protection, offering them a permanent home. Many former refugees are prominent in Australian business, government, education, arts, sport and community life.



Vietnamese refugees arriving in Darwin Harbour
Photo: Northern Territory Archives Service

Where do Australia's refugees come from?

In the past, Australia has assisted refugees from many parts of the world. Following the Second World War, most came from countries such as Germany, Poland and Ukraine. In the 1950s, we saw people arriving from Hungary and in the 1960s many came from Czechoslovakia. In the 1970s, people started coming from Indochina (Vietnam) and Latin America (Chile and El Salvador), and these groups continued to arrive well into the 1980s. The 1990s were dominated by the Balkan War, with a large number of people arriving from the Middle East and South Asia during this decade. Many of these people were from ethnic and religious minority groups or opponents of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan or Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. In the 2000s, the majority of entrants coming in under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program came from Africa, in particular Sudan and towards the end of the decade from Burma and Bhutan. In the recent years, resettled refugees have come predominantly from Iraq, Burma and Bhutan, Afghanistan, Syria and Congo.

What is the difference between an asylum seeker, a refugee and a migrant?

The terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' are often used interchangeably particularly in the media. However, there are important distinctions in their definitions.

Refugees are forced to flee from their country and cannot return unless their situation that forced them to leave improves. Some are forced to flee without any warning; many have experienced torture and trauma. The motivating factor for refugees is safety and protection from persecution and human rights abuse, not economic advantage.

An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking protection as a refugee and is still waiting to have his/her claim assessed. Every refugee has at some point being an asylum seeker.

A migrant is someone who chooses to leave their country to seek a better life. They choose where they migrate to and they are able to return whenever they like.



Who are illegal immigrants?

Who are illegal immigrants? The term 'illegal immigrants' refers to unlawful non-citizens who are residing in a country with legal permission. In Australia, most illegal immigrants have entered the country legally but have then overstayed their visa. The majority of these are from Western countries. **People who seek asylum are not illegal immigrants.** Nor are they breaking any laws. Under Australian law, a person is entitled to apply for asylum in our country if they are escaping persecution. This right is protected by international law as set out in Article 14 of the universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution".

Rights of refugees

Refugees have definitive rights that are set out in the Refugee Convention, which all signatory countries must comply with. The most essential component is the principle of **non-refoulement**, which prohibits the forcible return of a refugee to a situation where their life or freedom may be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

The Refugee Convention also stipulates that refugees should not be penalised for entering a country without prior authorisation, if they are fleeing from danger and present themselves to authorities on arrival. Accordingly, refugees have a lawful right to enter a country for the purposes of seeking asylum, regardless of how they arrive or whether they hold a valid travel or identity documents. The Convention additionally encompasses guidance concerning the recognition of civil rights and access to employment, education and the legal system.

After meeting residence requirements, refugees are entitled to apply for nationality of their country of residence (or another). In Australia, if you hold a permanent protection visa, you can currently apply for Australian citizenship after four years of residence, one of which must be on a permanent visa (In April 2017, the Australian Government announced changes to this process, but at the time of writing they have not yet passed the law). Under the current government, those who arrive by boat are currently only eligible for temporary protection visas, with no permanent visas to be granted in the first five years of the granting of their first TPV. At this time, the decision of whether to grant permanent protection is at the discretion of the Minister of Immigration and Border Protection.

How do refugees come to Australia?

Australia's Humanitarian Program is divided into an onshore and offshore component. The offshore component is made up of a majority of people who are considered under the refugee category and have been referred for resettlement by the UNHCR after being identified as a refugee.

The Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) is for applicants who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violations of their human rights and who are living outside their home country. Applications for the SHP visa rely on support by a proposer who is an Australian citizen, permanent resident or community organisation based in Australia. SHP entrants are required to meet health and character tests. They receive less support than Refugee Visa entrants.



35 Vietnamese refugees, 15 May 1984
Source: PH2 Phil Eggman

The onshore component is made up of refugees who seek refugee status after arriving in Australia. The majority enter as visitors or students, while others arrive by boat without valid travel documentation. Once someone who is seeking asylum has lodged a written application for refugee status with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), the application is assessed by an officer of the Department to establish whether the person is eligible for a protection visa. If the decision is positive, the person who is seeking asylum is granted a protection visa. For those who arrived with a valid visa, this is a permanent protection visa. For those who arrived by boat from late 2013, it is temporary and will be reassessed after three years.



Protesting against children in immigration detention

Source: John Englart (Takver) Flickr

According to the UNHCR statistics, Australia received 11,741 new claims for asylum in 2013. This was just 0.34% of the global total of 3,411,962. In 2014-15 the Humanitarian Program was set at 13,750 places. A total of 12,756 visas were granted, of which 11,009 visas were granted under the offshore component and 2,747 visas were granted under the onshore component according to the DIBP.

Refugee Stories

Refugee Week is about celebrating and listening to the stories and experiences of refugees. Our Refugee Week Ambassadors will be sharing the positive contributions made by refugees, view the Ambassador profiles at www.refugeeweek.org.au/refugee-week-ambassadors. More stories of successful Australia refugees can be found on our website, www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/international/journeys/stories

Refugee Statistics

The Refugee Council of Australia collates the most up to date statistical information on the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum, both internationally and domestically. A snapshot of the data is available at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/statistics. This year we also released our first ever State of the Nation: Refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia report. A critical review of Australia's refugee and asylum policies can be found www.refugeecouncil.org.au/publications/reports/state-nation-2017

Statistic Snapshot



Global

According to the UNHCR Global Trends Report 2015:

- There are now 21.3 million refugees worldwide.
- Top countries of origin include: Syria at 4.9 million, Afghanistan at 2.7 million and Somalia at 1.1 million.
- Collectively, people fleeing these three countries account for more than half of the world's refugees under UNHCR's mandate.
- In its planning for 2016, UNHCR has identified 1,153,296 refugees in need of resettlement. These refugees are divided (by region of asylum) between the Middle East and North Africa (369,334 people, 32.0%), Africa (391,939 people, 34.0%), Asia (169,559 people, 14.7%), Europe (214,972, 18.7%) and the Americas (7,493, 0.6%). Unfortunately, the number of resettlement places offered by governments to UNHCR is expected to be around 100,000.
- One in every 113 people globally is now either seeking asylum, internally displaced or a refugee. To put this number in perspective, the number of people forcibly displaced is greater than the populations of Australia and New Zealand and Canada combined.
- At the end of 2015 there were 107,000 resettlement places offered- representing just 0.66% of the 16.1 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate. In other words, at the current rate, it would take almost 150 years for all refugees under UNHCR's mandate to be resettled. This paltry resettlement number highlights the myth of any so called resettlement "queue".

[Click here to read the full report](http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7)
www.unhcr.org/576408cd7

The Refugee Council of Australia collates up to date statistical information, to view visit

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/statistics



Australia

According to the Annual Report of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP):

- In 2015-16 the Australian Government granted 17,555 refugees and humanitarian visas (p.70). These included
 - 2,003 visas for people already in Australia (the 'onshore' component)
 - 15,552 visas for people outside Australia ('the offshore' component) Including:
 - 3,790 visas to people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq as part of the Governments commitment to deliver 12,00 additional humanitarian places for these people
 - 6,730 Refugee visas
 - 5,032 visas under the Special Humanitarian Program
 - 1,277 Women at Risk visas

According to the DIBP:

- The number of applications that had not been lodged decreased from 14,097 in November 2016 to 11,548 in December 2016. However, this number is still many more than the number of applications finalised (7,379).
- As at 31 January 2017, there were 1,351 people in detention facilities (IDC, IRH, ITA, and APOD). Of those 1,351, 97 were women, 3 were children, and 1,251 were men.

For more information:

[Read the Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report 2015-16](http://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/annual-reports/annual-report-full-2015-16.pdf)

www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/annual-reports/annual-report-full-2015-16.pdf

[DIBP Humanitarian programme statistics](http://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/live-in-australia/humanitarian-programme)

www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/live-in-australia/humanitarian-programme

Facts about people who seek asylum

“

People seeking asylum who arrive by boat are not illegal immigrants.

”

People seeking asylum that journey over to Australia by boat are not engaging in illegal activity, nor are they immigrants. As a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention, refugees have the right to enter a country to seek asylum irrespective of their mode of transport, or whether they hold valid identity and travel documents. Australia law also permits unauthorised entry into Australia for the purposes of seeking asylum. Asylum seekers do not break any Australian laws by arriving on boats or without authorisation. Australia and international law grant these exceptions because it is not always safe or practicable for asylum seekers to obtain travel documents or travel through authorised channels. It is often too risky and dangerous for refugees to apply for a passport or exit visa or approach an Australian Embassy for a visa. Refugees are often forced to flee with little notice and do not have the time for such considerations. It is also inaccurate to refer to people seeking asylum as migrants. A migrant is someone who chooses to leave their country to seek a better life, and can return whenever they like. Refugees are forced to leave their country and cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave is alleviated.

It is inaccurate to equate applying for protection onshore with ‘jumping a queue’ or bypassing ‘proper’ channels. In fact, applying onshore is the standard procedure for seeking protection. As the definition outlines, refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin. This dictates that you cannot apply for a refugee status if you are inside your own country. Every refugee in the world- including those who Australia resettles from overseas- has, at some point, entered another country to seek asylum. Resettlement in a third country is the exception, not the rule. The majority of the world’s refugees either return home once conditions improve, or settle permanently in their country of first asylum. Resettlement only occurs when circumstances in the country of origin are unlikely to be resolved or the host country is unwilling or unable to provide protection. Resettlement should be understood as a solution for refugees who are unable to find effective protection elsewhere, but it is certainly not the standard or only legitimate way to find protection- it’s simply a different solution based on different circumstances. In reality, less than one percent of the world’s refugees were resettled in 2014. Even under these circumstances, the UN resettlement system works more like a lottery than a queue. Many refugees lack access to the UNHCR’s resettlement processes altogether and therefore simply do not have resettlement available as an option. Furthermore, refugees are prioritised for resettlement according to need, not according to how long they have been waiting. A person who has been waiting for resettlement for one year may be prioritised ahead of a person who has been waiting for 10 years, if the former need for resettlement is assessed as being greater. As there are only around 90,000 resettlement places available annually, only the highest priority refugees have access to this solution. It is unreasonable to expect refugees to remain indefinitely in situations of danger and insecurity, or to penalise them for seeking their own solutions, when the international community fails in its responsibility to provide effective protection.

“

People who arrive by boat and seeking asylum are not queue jumpers.

”

“

People seeking asylum who arrive on boats DO NOT take places away from other refugees in overseas camps.

”

The suggestion that people seeking asylum take places away from other refugees who are resettled from overseas does have some basis in truth, but this is a consequence of Australian government policy and not an implication of refugees trying to rot the system or “jump the queue”. The Australian government has numerically linked the two components of its refugee program- the onshore component, for people who apply for refugee status after arriving in Australia, and the offshore component, where Australia resettles recognised refugees and others in need of protection. This linking policy means that every time an onshore applicant is granted a Protection Visa, a place is deducted from the offshore program. This blurs the distinction between our legal obligation as a signatory of the Refugee Convention to resettle onshore applicants, and our voluntary contribution to the sharing of international responsibility through resettlement. The perception that there is a ‘queue’ which onshore applications are trying to evade is created by a policy choice which could easily be changed. No other country in the world links its onshore and offshore programs in this way.

The UN Refugee Convention excludes people who have committed war crimes, crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or other serious non-political crimes from obtaining refugee status. Additionally, all people seeking asylum must undergo rigorous security and character checks before being granted protection in Australia. It is therefore highly unlikely that a war criminal, terrorist, or any other person who posed a security threat would be able to enter Australia as a refugee. It is also improbable that a criminal or terrorist who would choose such a dangerous and difficult method to enter Australia, given that people seeking asylum who arrive without authorisation documents undergo more rigorous security and identity checks than other entrants to Australia. The majority of people seeking asylum who have reached Australia by boat have been found to be in need of protection as refugees. Between 70 and 95 per cent have typically been found to be refugees, compared to between 35 and 50 per cent of people seeking asylum who arrive with some form of temporary visa (e.g. tourist, student or temporary work visas). From July 2008 to June 2013, the final recognition rate for boat arrivals was 92%, compared to 47% for those who arrived on a temporary visa. In the four years to May 2013, there were only 56 refugees in immigration facilities who had received adverse security assessments. This represents a tiny portion of all refugee security assessments.

“

People seeking asylum who arrive by boat do not present a security threat to Australia.

”

“

Mandatory detention of people seeking asylum is not an essential security measure.

”

Australia is one of few nations in the world that imposes mandatory detention of people seeking asylum who arrive without visas. In most North American and European countries, only those deemed high risk are detained. Australian practice has also shown that people seeking asylum allowed to live in the community while their claims are processed are highly unlikely to abscond, because they have a vested interest in cooperation in order to gain full protection rights. In 2005, Australia introduced a community-based detention system that allowed a small number of people seeking asylum to live unsupervised in the community, support by the Red Cross. Of the 244 people placed in this program between July 2005 and May 2009, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship report that only two had absconded.

“
Tough border protection policies DO NOT stop people smugglers and prevent people seeking asylum from making risky journeys.
 ”

Refugee flows are primarily affected by war, unrest, violence and human rights abuses. Most people do not wish to leave their homes, families, friends and everything they know and hold dear. They do so as a last resort, to escape persecution and find safety and security for themselves and their families. For many refugees, this search for protection doesn't end once they escape their country of origin. In the Asia-Pacific region, most countries are not signatories to the UN Refugee Convention and lack a legal and administrative framework for addressing refugee protection issues. Here, refugees are treated as illegal immigrants: they are unable to work legally or access healthcare, and frequently face violence. These conditions often drive refugees to seek protection elsewhere in hope of finding genuine safety. Everyone agrees that we should stop people smuggling ventures which exploit people seeking asylum and place them in danger. However, policies based on deterrence fail to address the root cause of the problem. They do nothing to resolve the conditions which force refugees to flee their homes and undertake risky journeys in the first place, or to improve conditions in asylum-receiving countries. A more human, sustainable and constructive approach would be to work with other countries in the region to address protection issues in refugee-producing countries and promote better standard of refugee protection throughout the Asia-Pacific to enable refugees to find safety closer to home.

Australia does not take more than its fair share of refugees in either absolute or per capita terms. The overwhelming majority of refugees (86%) reside in the developing world. In December 2013, Pakistan hosted 1.6 million refugees or people seeking asylum, while Australia hosted only 34,503. Moreover, the bulk of our refugee population comes from Australia's generous and voluntary resettlement scheme, the third largest in the world, rather than onshore applications. Compared to other refugee-hosting countries, Australia receives a very small number of asylum applications onshore. In 2013, Australia received 11,741 applications, just 0.34% of the global total of 3,411,962 new asylum applications. The sense that Australia is being 'swamped' by refugees often stems from concerns over boat arrivals. Since 2009, just under 52,000 people seeking asylum have reached Australia by boat (and less than 70,000 since 1976). By contrast, since 2009, Yemen has received more than 420,000 boat arrivals more than 460,000 have crossed the Mediterranean Sea and more than 100,00 have fled across the Andaman Sea from Burma and Bangladesh.

“
Australia does not take its fair share of refugees.
 ”

“
Paying a people smuggler has no bearing on a person's refugee status.
 ”

Economic status has no bearing on refugee status. A refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted. It makes no difference whether a refugee is rich or poor- the point is that they are at risk of, or have experienced, persecution. Many refugees who come to Australia are educated, middle-class people whose education, profession or political opinions have drawn them to the attention of the authorities and resulted in their persecution.

“

Australia's refugee program is not unlimited.

”

Only six countries in the world- Pakistan, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Turkey- hosted more than half a million refugees in 2013. The high numbers of refugees in these countries are largely the result of major and prolonged conflicts in neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan (bordering Pakistan and Iran), Somalia (bordering Kenya), Syria (bordering Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan) and Iraq. Worldwide, the most common way that refugees travel to a country of asylum is overland, not on planes or boats. Because of its geographic isolation, Australia is one of the hardest countries to reach. Australia also has universal visa requirements and sanctions against airlines which allow foreign nationals to fly to Australia without visas. These measures greatly restrict access to Australia to citizens of many refugee-producing countries. It is therefore highly unlikely that Australia will ever receive the large numbers of onshore asylum applications that other countries experience.

Only six countries in the world- Pakistan, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Turkey- hosted more than half a million refugees in 2013. The high numbers of refugees in these countries are largely the result of major and prolonged conflicts in neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan (bordering Pakistan and Iran), Somalia (bordering Kenya), Syria (bordering Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan) and Iraq. Worldwide, the most common way that refugees travel to a country of asylum is overland, not on planes or boats. Because of its geographic isolation, Australia is one of the hardest countries to reach. Australia also has universal visa requirements and sanctions against airlines which allow foreign nationals to fly to Australia without visas. These measures greatly restrict access to Australia to citizens of many refugee-producing countries. It is therefore highly unlikely that Australia will ever receive the large numbers of onshore asylum applications that other countries experience.

“

Are refugee camps safe places for the displaced to go?

”

“

Temporary protection is not a solution

”

There is also evidence to suggest that TPVs may have actually encouraged some people seeking asylum to undertake risky journeys to Australia. Because TPV holders could not apply for family reunion, their family members facing persecution overseas- the majority of whom were women and children- were driven to undertake the same dangerous journey to Australia. After TPVs were introduced, the proportion of women and children amongst people seeking asylum arriving by boat more than tripled, from 12.8 per cent of boat arrivals in 1999, to 27.6 per cent in 2000, to 41.8 per cent in 2001. TPVs were abolished by the Rudd Government in 2008 but have been reintroduced by the Abbott Government, confirmed by legislation passed by Parliament in December 2014.



Vial refugee camp in Chios, Greece.
Source: Mstyslav Chernov

By definition, refugees are survivors. They have survived because they have the courage, ingenuity and resilience to have done so. These are qualities which we value in Australia. The challenge for Australia is to assist newly arrived people to process the experiences of their past and rebuild their lives in Australia. If we do this we will reap the benefits of the qualities and experiences they bring to Australia. Research carried out by the Refugee Council of Australia has shown that refugees make important economic, civil and social contributions to Australian society. Australia's refugees and humanitarian entrants have found success in every field of endeavour including the arts, sports, media, science, research, business and civic and community life.

**“
Refugees and
people seeking
asylum do not
receive higher social
security payments
than Australian aged
pensioners.
”**

A refugee who has permanent residency receives the same social security benefits as any other Australia citizen or permanent resident in the same circumstances. Refugees apply for social security through Centrelink and go through the same process as all other applicants. There are no Centrelink allowances that one can receive simply by virtue of being a refugee, and Centrelink payments are calculated at the same rate for refugees and non-refugees. People seeking asylum- those who have not had their applications assessed or are not eligible for permanent residency- are not entitled to the same forms of financial support as citizens or permanent residents. The Asylum Seeker Assistance (ASA) Scheme provides assistance to some eligible people seeking asylum who are in the process of having their refugee status determined. The ASA Scheme offers income support to cover basic living expenses, and is paid at 89% of the Newstart Allowance.

**“
Refugees contribute to
Australian society
”**