

### Will there be the same number of humanitarian visas granted this year?

No. There will be fewer refugee and humanitarian visas available this financial year, compared to last year.

In October 2020 the Department of Home Affairs announced that the ceiling for this year (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) is 13,750 visas. This is to be split between onshore and offshore grants. There will be up to 12,000 visas available for people overseas, and 1,750 for people already in Australia applying for a refugee visas.

While very few refugee or humanitarian visas have been granted since March 2020, the Department of Home Affairs is continuing to progress applications to prepare them for the time when the granting of visas resumes.

### If a person has been granted a refugee or humanitarian visa, can they still travel to Australia even during COVID-19?

No. If a person has been granted a refugee or humanitarian visa overseas, but has not yet entered Australia, they will not be able to come to Australia even though they hold a visa, unless they are the spouse or dependent child of an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or they have compassionate and compelling reasons to travel here.

If the date of entry on their visa will expire before the travel restrictions are lifted, the Department of Home Affairs will contact the visa holder to make other arrangements to ensure they can enter Australia once restrictions have ended.

## Travel restrictions

### Coming to Australia

From 20 March 2020 the only people who can enter Australia are:

- Australian citizens or the spouse or dependent child of a citizen
- Australian permanent residents or the spouse or dependent child of a permanent resident
- a New Zealand citizen who ordinarily lives in Australia
- people with a compassionate and compelling reason to travel to Australia

All travellers arriving in Australia must go into quarantine for two weeks after arrival. They will not be able to quarantine at their home but will be accommodated in a hotel. Most people will have to pay the cost of quarantine, although some refugee and humanitarian visas holder will not have to pay.

Temporary visa holders currently outside Australia will need to apply for an exemption in line with the above; those without a current valid visa will not be considered for a travel exemption.

# COVID-19: Changes to humanitarian visas, travel restrictions and citizenship processing

FACTSHEET

## Leaving Australia

From 25 March 2020, Australian citizens and Australian permanent residents are restricted from travelling overseas.

If you need to travel outside Australia, you need to apply for permission to leave. You will only get permission to leave Australia if:

- you have to travel for critical business reasons
- you need to go overseas to get urgent medical treatment, and that treatment is not available in Australia
- you have a need to travel for urgent and unavoidable personal business
- you have compassionate or humanitarian reasons to travel overseas
- your travel is in the national interest

It is not clear when these travel restrictions will end.

## Changes to citizenship processing

### Applying for citizenship

New applications for Australian citizenship are being accepted and processed as normal.

### Citizenship ceremonies

Face to face citizenship ceremonies are being held in some locations. In others, people are being invited to have their ceremony via video link.

Usually a person has 12 months from the time they are approved for citizenship to attend a ceremony. Because of COVID-19 this period will be extended if necessary and citizenship approval will not be cancelled if a person has not been able to attend a ceremony.

## How can clients get help?

For free legal help you can call 1300 888 529 or call the Refugee Service on 8713 6725 or send us an email to [refugeeservice@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:refugeeservice@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask for LawAccess NSW. If you find it hard to hear or speak, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and ask for LawAccess NSW or visit [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au).

This factsheet is intended as a general guide to the law. Do not rely on this information as legal advice. We recommend you talk to a lawyer about your situation. This information is correct at the time of writing; however, it may change.

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