



Australia needs to continue welcoming people seeking asylum and refugees

October 2026

"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35.

This year, Pauline Hanson's One Nation party, the Liberal Party and the Labor Party have announced cuts to the number of migrants who can settle in Australia or stay temporarily. One Nation has announced it would aim to have more people departing Australia than arriving for the first three years of a One Nation government.

While the Labor Party has so far not announced cuts to the number of refugees Australia will take (known as humanitarian places), in early October the Liberal and National Parties announced that in Government they would slash the number of refugees that Australia will resettle by half. The Leader of the Opposition, Angus Taylor, boasted that the Liberals and Nationals "will deliver the largest cut to immigration in Australian history."

Under a Liberal and National Party Government, the number of refugees accepted annually would drop from a maximum of 20,000 to 10,000. People in Australia seeking to apply for asylum will need to do so within 30 days of arrival. The 1,700 Palestinian refugees from Gaza would have their visas "re-assessed entirely with far greater scrutiny", raising the risk some may be removed back to life-threatening danger.

The Liberal and National Party policy will cut net overseas migration to 100,000 people annually for two years, before returning to an annual cap of 160,000. The current net overseas migration is around 292,000. They will not change the existing arrangements for family reunion visas.

The National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia responded, stating:

Our public conversation about migration policy must be grounded in human dignity, compassion and a confidence that cultural diversity enriches rather than diminishes our nation. Ultimately, immigration policy is about who belongs.

A confident nation does not fear diversity. It recognises diversity as a strength in our common life....

This deeper understanding of belonging becomes even more urgent when considering the proposal to halve Australia's humanitarian intake at a time when conflict and displacement are forcing millions of people from their homes.

The migration debate is about much more than numbers. It is about people seeking safety, opportunity, and a future for themselves and their families.

The Uniting Church in Australia has a long- standing commitment to welcoming the stranger. This commitment is grounded in Scripture and reflected in the life of Jesus himself, whose family crossed borders as they fled violence.

Together with churches across the country, we seek to live out Christ's call to stand alongside those who are vulnerable and in distress, including those who come to our nation needing protection and a chance to rebuild their lives.

Number of Refugee Places

The number of refugees worldwide has continued to increase from 8.5 million in 1980 to 31.6 million in 2023, 38 million in 2025 and 42.5 million in February 2026.



The UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported in June 2026 that 70 per cent of refugees remain trapped in exile for years and many live below the poverty line.

The Labor Party had promised to increase Australia's refugee intake to 27,000, with an additional 10,000 places through complementary pathways, such as those sponsored by Australian community groups. The Labor Government increased the refugee intake to 20,000 in the 2023-2024 financial year, but has not increased it further.

Every resettlement place offered by the Australian Government is now more critical than ever.

Resettlement provides vital, life-saving solutions for refugees and tangible support to countries that host many refugees. It provides hope and practical alternatives to refugees who may otherwise see dangerous onward journeys as the only way out of unsustainable situations in which they and their families are at significant risk.



Opening opportunities for exploitation on farms

The Liberal and National Party policy announcement also included a commitment to introduce an Agriculture Visa from 2030. Farmer lobby groups have previously advocated for such a visa without the safeguards that people on the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme are entitled to. Depending on the design of such a visa, it may increase worker exploitation on farms.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon Angus Taylor MP

Leader of the Opposition

PO Box 6022

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Mr Taylor

Points to make in your letters:

- Express concern that the Liberal and National Parties have announced that, in government, they would cut the number of humanitarian places Australia would provide to 10,000.
- Express concern that such a policy sends a very negative signal about Australia's values and represents a major negative departure from the Liberal Party's significant role in developing and improving the Refugee and Humanitarian Program over more than 75 years.
- Affirm that public debate about immigration must be grounded in dignity and the value of every human being.
- Point out that humanitarian protection provides vital, life-saving solutions for refugees that allow them to get on with their lives. Many refugees are fleeing totalitarian regimes. The Australian Government should support those fleeing such regimes.
- Urge the Liberal Party to reverse its policy and commit to maintaining the existing annual humanitarian protection intake.
- Further, ask that they scrap plans to introduce an Agriculture Visa, unless it is only for skilled positions. Express concern that an Agriculture Visa without the protections of the PALM Scheme is likely to lead to greater levels of exploitation on farms.

Please send any replies to your letters to jim@victas.uca.org.au

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