

FACT SHEET: ASYLUM SEEKERS IN AUSTRALIA

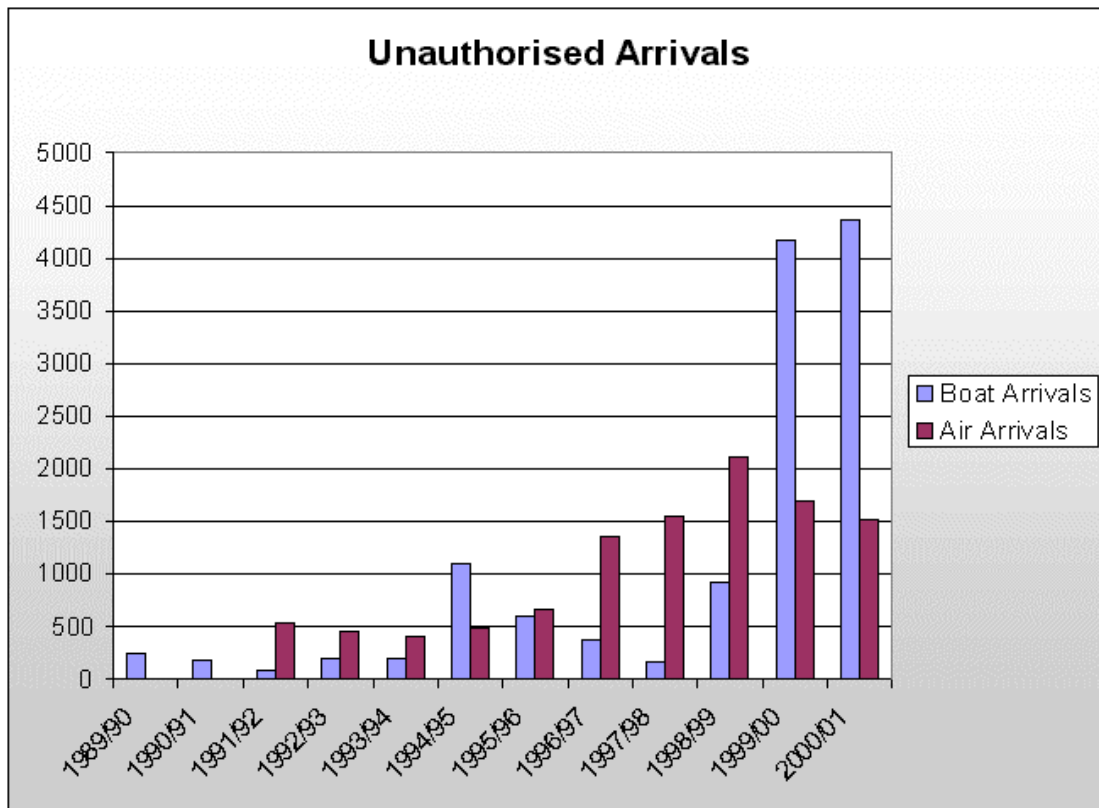
How many people apply for asylum in Australia?

Number of asylum applicants in Australia and selected countries

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Australia	7, 986	11, 135	8, 128	8, 390	12, 185	13, 105
Canada	25, 600	25, 600	24, 300	24, 973	30, 124	36, 534
Denmark	5, 100	5, 900	5, 100	5, 699	6, 467	10, 077
Germany	127, 000	149, 200	151, 700	143, 429	138, 319	117, 648
Sweden	9, 000	5, 800	9, 700	12, 844	11, 231	16, 303
United Kingdom	55, 000	27, 900	32, 500	46, 020	71, 160	76, 040
United States	154, 500	128, 200	84, 800	54, 952	41, 377	48, 054

Source: Refugee Council of Australia website (<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>)

How many people arrive in Australia without authorisation?



Source: Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs website (<http://www.immi.gov.au>)

Who's in detention? How long for?

Asylum seekers arriving in Australia without authorisation are detained while their applications for asylum are processed. The Department of Immigration says at 2 November 2001, there were 2,736 people in immigration detention, about 40 per cent of them in the Woomera facility in South Australia.

The detainee population covered 84 nationalities. The five main nationalities of detainees in 2000-01 were Afghan 27.7%, Iraqi 13.2%, Iranian 7.0%, Chinese 5.2% and Indonesian 4.5%. Five years ago the main nationalities were Vietnamese and Chinese.

Department figures show most detainees are released after 6-12 months. In some cases, people are detained for more than two years.

What is the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)?

Asylum seekers arriving in Australia without authorisation are eligible only three year temporary protection visas. After this time, TPV holders must re-apply again for refugee status. Asylum seekers arriving lawfully are still eligible for permanent residence visas. Two classes of refugees have been created, with very different entitlements.

Restrictions accompanying the TPV include: no family reunion; no access to federally funded English classes; limited access to social security benefits, immigration settlement services and Medicare; full fees for tertiary education; no automatic right of return after leaving Australia.

New services, often provided by church agencies and mostly using voluntary labour, are being established to help TPV holders.

The most pressing needs are: affordable accommodation, access to English classes, access to employment. Many TPV holders are deeply distressed by their inability to be reunited with their families.

Where can I get more information?

Refugee Council of Australia

Australia's peak refugee advocacy organisation

Phone: (02) 9660 5300

Internet site: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/>

Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs

The federal government department that manages humanitarian visa programs.

Internet site: <http://www.immi.gov.au>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The UN agency to assist refugees around the world

Internet site: <http://www.unhcr.ch>

Unfinished Journeys: refugees and migration in Asia and the Pacific

ABC site including background information as well as news and features

Internet site: <http://goasiapacific.com/specials/journeys>