

A Global and Local Crisis

How many refugees are there?

There are
21.3 million
refugees in the world,
including more than
5 million Palestinians

Approximately
40.8 million
people are forcibly
displaced* within
their own countries

Only just
107 thousand
refugees are given
the chance to resettle
each year

Equal to
0.5 per cent
of the global
refugee population

Critically
51.0 per cent
of the global
refugee population
are children

How many does Australia take?

Of the
2.45 million
refugees who had their
status recognised
or were resettled in 2015

Only
0.48 per cent
were assisted
by Australia
(11,776)

Only
6.8 per cent
of all immigrants
to Australia were
refugees

Australia is
32nd
per capita
ranked by this
measure

Australia is
47th
relative to
total national
GDP ranked by
this measure

refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/statistics/unchr2015

www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/year-at-a-glance/2015-16

*Internally displaced are people who are forced to flee their homes, often for the very same reasons as refugees – war, civil conflict, political strife, and gross human rights abuse – but who remain within their own country and do not cross an international border. They are therefore not eligible for protection under the same international system as refugees. Also, there is no single international body entrusted with their protection and assistance. *UNESCO 2016.*

Defining a ‘refugee’

A refugee is a person who is outside their own country and is either unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin due to well-founded fear of being persecuted due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular group.

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention includes the core principle that refugees should not be returned to nations where they face “serious threats to their life or freedom”.

Defining a ‘person seeking asylum’

A person seeking asylum is someone applying for protection as a refugee. People seeking asylum are seeking safety because they are not safe at home.

It is a fundamental human right to seek safety from persecution. People seeking asylum want what all of us want for ourselves and our families, to live in safety and peace.

Defining a ‘migrant’

Migrants choose to leave their home countries for a wide variety of reasons, including education, work opportunities and family relationships.

They are not nearly as vulnerable or at risk as refugees or people seeking asylum and they still enjoy the protections of their home governments.

Australia's response to people seeking asylum

The vast majority of the world's more than 20 million refugees seek shelter in the least developed and poorest countries of the world. Those that are not resettled languish in refugee camps around the world or are kept in a state of limbo, living in communities that will not accept them, but with nowhere to go.

Since 2013 people seeking asylum have been detained by the Australian government indefinitely in off-shore detention centres, or released into the community while their application is being processed. The Government can take years to process an application, leaving the person seeking asylum in a state of limbo with minimal supports.

The current Australian government position is that no person who arrives by boat seeking asylum will be granted permanent protection in Australia. Those that are in the community while their applications are being processed are often denied the right to work, access to affordable medical treatment, or income supports such as those provided by Centrelink.

Local challenges

There are approximately 12,000 people seeking asylum living in Victoria. While we acknowledge this is a better option when compared with mandatory detention, either off-shore or in Australia, they still face many obstacles.

The consequences of this approach

Medical evidence has shown that prolonged detention has severe adverse effects on physical and mental health which can lead to self-harm and even suicide. The rate of depressive illness and post-traumatic stress disorder among people seeking asylum is 61 per cent compared to a population average of 4 per cent.

Baptcare works for safety, opportunity and a fair go for people seeking asylum. Our commitment is to see all people experiencing fullness of life, regardless of culture, belief, and circumstance. Our vision for communities where every person is cherished sees us working to uphold the dignity and rights of people seeking asylum, and the creation of environments where all people can thrive.

For people seeking asylum in the community, government policy often leaves them vulnerable to homelessness and poverty, mental and physical health difficulties and social isolation. For people who have so much to offer Australia, our actions contribute to ongoing trauma and diminishing of human potential.

What can we do better?

Baptcare believes that supporting people seeking asylum to live in the community while awaiting efficient processing of their visa applications by the government is the most productive model for social inclusion and integration.

In order to facilitate this, people seeking asylum need access to English language classes, support to build job and life skills, and opportunities for employment.

What can you do?

We encourage you to add your voice to the voices of many Australians calling for change. You can do this by:

- Lobbying your local, state and federal representatives for the creation of more positive policies. For policy suggestions see our Baptcare's Social Policy info sheet.
- Supporting community organisations such as Baptcare, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and the Red Cross that work for positive social and political change.

For further information and opportunities to advocate for people seeking asylum and for current statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum visit baptcare.org.au/sanctuary

Support Sanctuary

• Donate.

Money, household items, food vouchers.

• Employ.

Sanctuary residents who are allowed to work are keen to find opportunities.

• Educate.

Invite us to speak to your community group, show a film, talk to friends.

• Volunteer.

Your time, skills and energy can make a difference.

To get involved contact us:

sanctuary@baptcare.org.au