

Humanitarian Visas

Humanitarian Visas are permanent visas. They are generally granted to people who are:

- outside Australia; and
- at risk of serious human rights abuses; and
- outside their home country.

People in Australia who are permanent residents or Australian citizens and are not unauthorised maritime arrivals can propose their family members for a humanitarian visa. The proposer agrees to pay the applicants' travel costs and help them with housing and settling in Australia.

Priorities

The Australian government only grants a set number of these visas every year. There are always many more applications than places available. This means even people who meet the requirements of the visa may not be granted one or they may wait for many years.

Applications are given a priority based on the proposer's visa and citizenship status and their relationship with the applicant.

FIRST PRIORITY are people proposed by their partner or dependent child, or, if the proposer is under 18 years of age, their proposer's parent. The proposer:

- must also have been granted a Humanitarian visa or be an Australian citizen who previously held a Protection visa;
- must have been a member of the applicant's immediate family when their own visa was granted; and
- told Home Affairs about the applicant before their own visa was granted; and
- propose the applicant/s within 5 years of their own visa being granted.

SECOND PRIORITY are other people who are proposed by their partner, child, parent or sibling and that proposer does not have a Protection visa.

OTHER APPLICATIONS (FOR GRANDPARENTS, AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS, NIECES, NEPHEWS AND OTHERS AS WELL ANY WHERE THE PROPOSER HAS A PROTECTION VISA) ARE LOWER PRIORITY (PRIORITIES 3 TO 5) AND FAR LESS LIKELY TO BE GRANTED.

How to Apply?

People with a proposer must apply through a Home Affairs ImmiAccount. RAILS has a factsheet to help you create an ImmiAccount.

You will need to explain the dangers the applicant faces, and answer questions about the applicant's identity, nationality, family, travel, education, work and where they have lived in the past.

You will also need to give information about the proposer's identity, their immigration history and their relationship with the applicant.

All details in the application forms must be accurate. They should be consistent with the information that you (the proposer) gave Home Affairs to get your visa. If there are differences, then Home Affairs might doubt the story you gave before. Get legal advice before you lodge the application.

You must include a specific address for the applicant. If the applicant is in danger and moving around or is in hiding, then the last stable address could be provided, with an explanation.

Proving identity is critical. Attach copy of identity documents and passport (even if expired). If there are no ID documents you can still lodge, but explain why there are no documents.

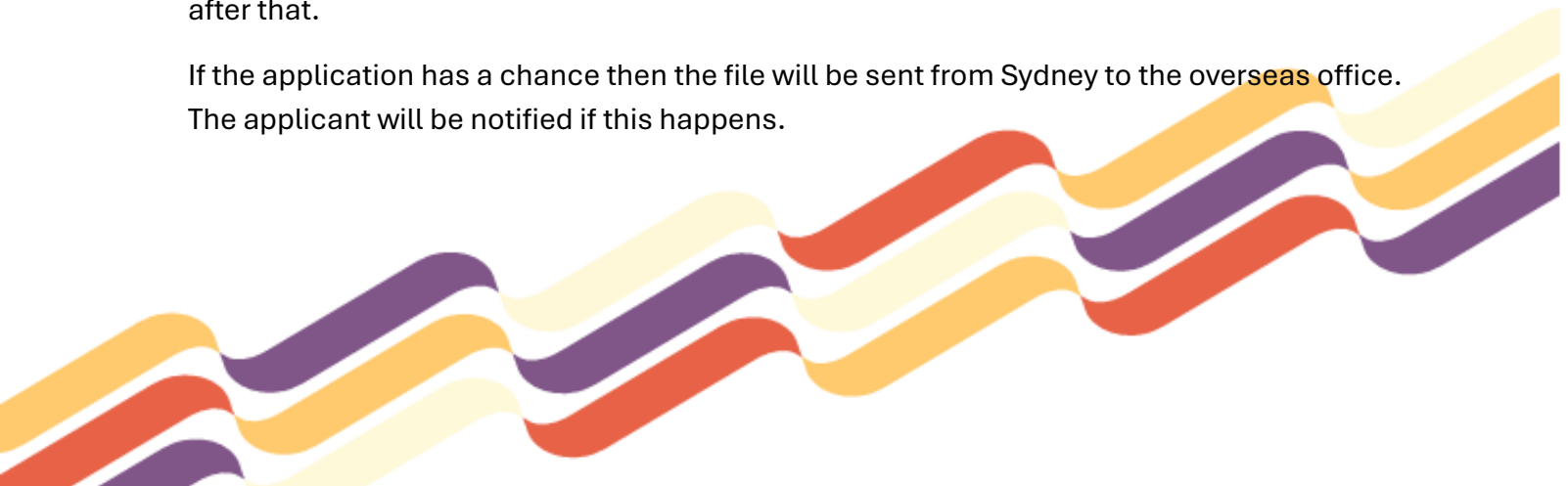
After an application is lodged

The contact person on the form will get an email that the application is registered on the Home Affairs system. The acknowledgement gives you a file number and says when it was lodged. This number is important to keep safe in case you want to follow up later.

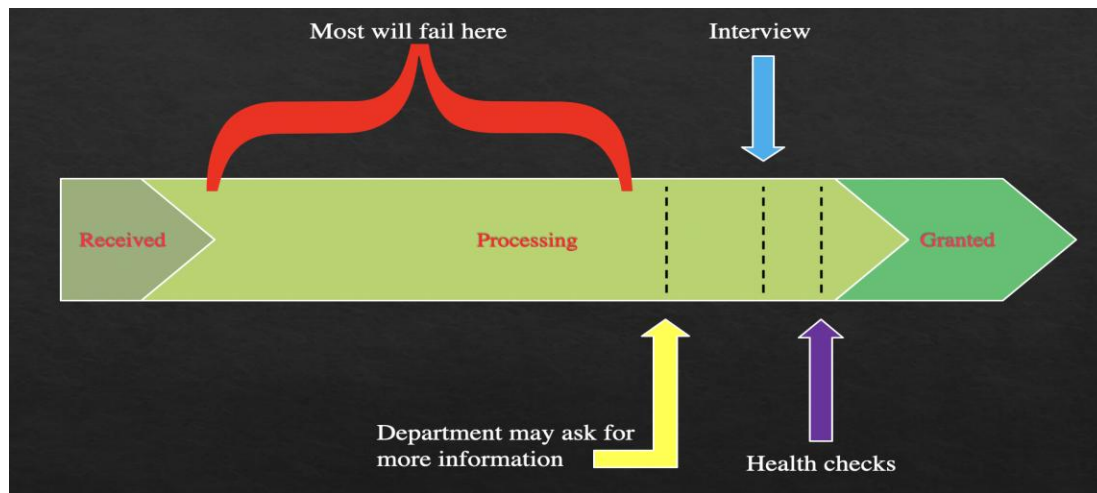
Most applications go to Home Affairs' Sydney office. There are huge numbers and only small number of visas granted. Applications can take 7 or more years to be processed.

Many applications get refused in the first 12 months. Others can be refused a long time after that.

If the application has a chance then the file will be sent from Sydney to the overseas office. The applicant will be notified if this happens.



If the application was lodged overseas, the overseas office will notify the next stage of processing.



ADDING MORE INFORMATION AFTER LODGING

If the proposer or applicants' contact details change or other circumstances change, it is important to tell Home Affairs. You can do this through the ImmiAccount you lodged the application with.

CAN YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION?

You can put in other non-humanitarian applications, such as a skilled or family visas, while waiting for this one to be processed. Those applications cost money to lodge but may have a greater chance of success. You should get legal advice to understand what options there might be.

CAN YOU SPEED UP THE PROCESS?

Home Affairs says they are unable to tell you how long it will take for a decision to be made. They also say that processing times vary and that if many people ask them for updates, they have less time to process applications. When the application progresses to a new stage or a decision is made, the applicants will be notified.

It is not normally possible to speed up the process.

VISITING FAMILY WHILE THEY WAIT OVERSEAS

While you wait you could travel and visit your family in the country where they are staying.

If Home Affairs finds that the applicant has returned to their home country the application may be refused. A humanitarian applicant must be outside their home country.

FAMILY TRYING TO VISIT YOU IN AUSTRALIA

If your family overseas are in a refugee situation and apply for a visitor visa, they will normally get refused. Home Affairs think they will not be genuine visitors but will apply for a protection visa once they arrive in Australia.

If a visitor visa application is refused it is cheaper and quicker to apply again. It is more expensive and takes longer to apply for a review of the decision to the Administrative Review Tribunal.

What if an application is refused?

You cannot apply for a review of humanitarian visa refusals. You can apply again, or you may be able to apply for a visa in the Family Stream, which has greater prospects of success. See RAILS factsheets on Partner Visas and Visas for Children.

Other visa options

There are skilled and family migration programs which have strict rules about who can qualify. You should get legal advice if you think your family members might qualify for one of those visas.

There are also some refugee programs:

- Community Support Program - community organisations, people or businesses can propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects. There are large application fees involved. In Queensland, you can contact [Multicultural Australia](#) for information about CSP.
- The [Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot](#) matches skilled refugees with Australian employers.
- [Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot](#) (CRISP) program is where a community support group sponsors refugees who do not have existing family links in Australia.

Keeping strong together

There is so much uncertainty and very long wait time. Sadly, many applications are rejected.



We deeply miss family, but communities are very good at finding strength and joy together:

- Sharing food
- Music and dance
- Community events
- Settlement and other community groups
- Nature helps us heal - walk in a park, do gardening,
- Professional counsellors, such as QPASTT (www.qpastt.org.au)
- Connect with First Nations people in your new country (www.naidoc.org.au)

Legal help

Queensland

[Refugee and Immigration Legal Service \(RAILS\)](#)

New South Wales

[Refugee Advice & Casework Service \(RACS\)](#)

[Immigration Advice and Rights Centre \(IARC\)](#)

Victoria

[Refugee Legal](#) (also South Australia and Northern Territory)

[Asylum Seeker Resource Centre \(ASRC\)](#)

Western Australia

[Circle Green](#)

Tasmania

[Tasmania Refugee Legal Service \(TRLS\)](#)

This factsheet is general information not legal advice. You should always speak to a lawyer before applying for a visa, sponsoring someone or doing anything that might affect your immigration status. Last updated 18 August 2026.

