



DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION

INSPIRING ACTION FOR A FAIRER WORLD

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Impacts of a Temporary Visa Status

Arts Internship Final Report

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Table 1: TPV, SHEV & PV Categories and their restrictions

Abbreviations

AHRC – Australian Human Rights Commission

AMEP – Adult Migrant English Program

DIBP – Department of Immigration and Border Protection

HECS – Higher Education Contribution Scheme

IMA – Irregular Maritime Arrival

NGO – Non-Government Organisation

PV – Protection Visa

SHEV – Safe Haven Enterprise Visa

SSRM – State-Specific Regional Migration

TPV – Temporary Protection Visa

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Executive Summary

Since the reintroduction of Temporary Protection Visas in 2013, asylum seekers who arrive in Australia without a valid visa face an increasingly difficult path to attaining permanent residency and in fact, will likely be held in mandatory detention for an indefinite period of time, before either being denied refugee status, or released into the community on a temporary visa. This report aims to provide recommendations as to how the Don Dunstan Foundation can proceed with their mission of influencing change for disadvantaged groups, such as asylum seekers, among the greater community. There will be a focus on the disadvantage experienced by asylum seekers in South Australia who have settled in Australia on a Temporary Protection Visa or Safe Haven Enterprise Visa and the report will conclude with recommendations to ultimately reduce disadvantage and facilitate effective settlement into the South Australian community.

1.1 Methodology

Initial research for this report involved conducting a literature review on prior studies published in relation to asylum seeker settlement in Australia. The preparation for the report involved spending one day a week at the Don Dunstan Foundation, collecting research from Australian Government departments, academic resources and material provided directly by the foundation. The literature review provided an avenue for forming a relevant research question by identifying gaps in knowledge.

- What aspects of migrant disadvantage are most prominent in South Australia?
- To what extent does a temporary visa status contribute negatively to refugee settlement?
- In what ways can the Don Dunstan Foundation take effective action to combat migrant disadvantage in South Australia?

1.2 Limitations

At this time, minimal research has been undertaken concerning the impact of temporary visa classes on migrants. Previous studies have examined host community hostility to new immigrants, economic impacts for regional towns and various aspects of settlement such as housing, employment, education, health, identity and cultural adaptation. Of the research undertaken, very little was conducted in a South Australian context and as such there are

limitations on drawing conclusions based on other states or countries. Furthermore, research was confounded by the University of Adelaide ethics policy prohibiting the ability to formally interview relevant individuals. Finally, the brevity of the report limits the broad scope of the issue at hand.

1.3 Findings

Research reveals five primary areas of concern to be addressed, stemming from the difficulty associated with temporary visa classes. These areas include employment, education, housing, health and the negative impact of media and government representations of the issue. Access to employment is hindered by a lack of support and prior Australian work experience, a complex skills recognition process and the existence of niche industries for refugees. Further settlement difficulties arise in the housing context due to insufficient support services and the hesitance of landlords to lease properties to ‘temporary’ citizens. With mental health issues often already present among a large number of refugees, the continued uncertainty of a temporary visa only exasperates these conditions, and poor introductory assistance to Medicare and Centrelink services prevents this group from accessing adequate health care. Moreover, the discourse presented on the issue by government and media incites hostility from the communities in which TPV and SHEV holders enter, stalling or preventing successful integration.

1.4 Recommendations

The report makes the following recommendations to the Don Dunstan Foundation regarding how to proceed in advocating for asylum seekers:

1. That the foundation develops a policy position on temporary protection and make this an accessible resource to advocate for positive change.
2. That the foundation collaborates with relevant partners, organisations and government departments to develop a Refugee Employment Register.
3. That the foundation build its social media presence and audience with the aim of changing the conversation surrounding asylum seekers in South Australia.

2. Introduction

2.1 Policy Background

The UNHCR is adamant that temporary protection measures should be employed only in exceptional circumstances, where it is not immediately possible to grant permanent protection (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2013, p. 24). In spite of this, Australia's only form of protection offered to asylum seekers is temporary. The Australian Government has increasingly tightened policies for persons seeking protection in recent years, particularly those arriving without an existing valid visa. In October 2013, Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) were reintroduced – after being abolished in 2008 – and the ability for a refugee to apply for a Permanent Protection Visa was renege. Following this, in June 2014 the Abbott Government introduced the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill to ultimately transfer people on Safe Haven or Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) Visas to the TPV, and consequently lessen the benefits they are entitled to, which passed in March 2015 (*Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas*, 2016). Despite the fact that the bill was passed in 2015, the law is applicable to any person seeking asylum in Australia without a valid visa, regardless of their arrival time (Refugee Council of Australia 2016a). These policies have been maintained by the Turnbull Government and from September 2015 to March 2016 both SHEVs and TPVs had been granted at tremendously low levels; approximately 20 from 2,000 applicants and a similar number from 1,400 applicants, respectively (*Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas*, 2016). Bridging visas are granted to asylum seekers whilst pending approval of an application for a longer term visa, such as a TPV or SHEV. Upon issue of a bridging visa, asylum seekers may be released into the community from detention however maintain very limited rights (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013).

Issues surrounding disadvantage created by temporary visa status can be historically traced back to the initial implementation of this visa class in 1999 by the Howard Government. Despite the prominence of these issues, policy around TPVs has become more stringent in recent years. Previously, after three years on a TPV a person was eligible to apply for permanent protection, however, under current legislation, only a successive TPV or SHEV may be issued. Marston (2004, p. 66) infers that the ongoing existence and increasingly strict conditions of the TPV can be attributed to the political belief that irregular maritime arrivals (IMA) will be discouraged from traveling to Australia under this regime. The role of the media

in reporting on asylum seekers also demonstrates a strong correlation between public opinion and the success, or lack thereof, of reception into the community over a number of years. In the Howard era, the government asserted its tough policies were driven by public opinion, however there is evidence to suggest that in the post-war period, the government has led the public to desired opinions (Klocker & Dunn, 2003, p. 75). Historically, the government of Australia has distributed propaganda to portray non-Anglo immigrants as peaceful assimilators, in contrast to more recent discourse, which has had an emphasis on generating mistrust and concern (Klocker & Dunn, 2003, p. 75). State-media information manipulation has been demonstrated in a number of studies, according to Klocker and Dunn, (2003, p. 74) who argue that the state “exert[s] an influence on the media as an economic benefactor ... censor of information and ... a major source of ‘credible information.’”

2.2 Refugee Resettlement Experience: Overview

This report aims to assess the disadvantage experienced by asylum seekers in South Australia, specifically disadvantage that is enforced by the abovementioned visa classes and the conditions attached to these. There is no doubt that holding a temporary visa is extremely unsettling for a migrant and detrimental to both the individual and community in a variety of ways. On an individual level, Marston (2004, p. 65) explains the primary barriers that arise out of temporary protection status stem from discrimination by both employers and the wider public. From a broader perspective, TPVs create an obstacle for integration into society, with research suggesting TPV holders focus merely on surviving rather than cultural maintenance, therefore hindering successful acculturation (Mansouri et al. 2006, p. 393).

Researchers have identified a number of factors contributing to disadvantage experienced by asylum seekers and how this effects their integration to society. One of the leading factors is a hostile reception by the host communities, largely caused by negative government and media discourse in Australia. According to Klocker, (2004, p. 3) asylum seekers have been portrayed using negative and misleading labels, leading to exclusion from the Australian space. Further to this, Hugo (2014, p. 31) has identified significant difficulty experienced by asylum seekers entering the labour market, listing barriers such as language, education, discrimination and structural disadvantage. In addition, migrants face difficulty in settling into new communities, especially in regional areas where some particular policies feed temporary

visa holders to assist in increasing declining populations and addressing skill shortages. Socioeconomic determinants of disadvantage in this regard refer to employment, housing, education, health, settlement services and social aspects of assimilating into a new community (Goel & Goel, 2009). The impact of each of these concerns will be assessed in the context of South Australia, concluding with appropriate recommendations to provide a smoother transition for migrants to the state, producing benefits for both asylum seekers and the local communities they enter.

3. Literature Review and Analysis

It has been demonstrated that the release of asylum seekers into the community on temporary visas intensifies disadvantage upon an already vulnerable group of people. In a global context, research conducted in Europe by Koser and Black (1999) concludes that there is no consistent category of temporary protection and no unanimous agreement on how to shift from temporary protection. Despite a proposal for a formalised status, ensuring standard legal rights for temporary protection, no such status has been reached and nations like Australia have constructed individual policies for accepting and settling refugees (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 7).

After being held in mandatory detention whilst awaiting confirmation of their need for asylum, asylum seekers are usually issued a bridging visa pending approval of a more substantive visa. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) claim that bridging visas serve a useful purpose as they allow asylum seekers to be released from detention facilities following certain security checks, however acknowledge that the conditions of bridging visas have a significant impact on the facilitation of basic human rights. One such condition is the simple notion of a temporary visa. Mansouri et al., (2006, pp. 396-397) explore how the temporary status of a person negatively impacts settlement as a constant threat of repatriation remains present.

It is known that humanitarian refugees take more time to settle and have greater difficulty settling in developed nations as a result of the long, arduous process of forced migration and lower levels of wealth and family support (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 8). It has also been recognised

that asylum seekers entering the workforce face exclusion through language, education, discrimination and structural disadvantage (Hugo, 2014, p. 31).

Upon the reintroduction of temporary visas, research focused heavily on the legality of the issuance of such visas, however has gradually shifted to the social justice implications as temporary visa holders have begun settling into the community. To date there has been little research on the impact of TPVs in Australia, particularly South Australia. The most relevant paper was published ten years ago as a comparative analysis by Hinsliff (2006) who addressed the differences in resettlement and integration experiences for both temporary and permanent refugees in Adelaide, South Australia.

Previous research has demonstrated significant disadvantage experienced by refugees settling into the Australian community. However, there is no research examining the resettlement impact of temporary visa categories and no study which focuses on experiences in South Australia, particularly regional South Australia. This is a notable gap in knowledge as South Australia is the only state in which the federal government's State-Specific Regional Migration (SSRM) Scheme applies to the entire state, including its capital city (Hugo, 2008, p. 135). This project uses secondary research to create a platform for this literature gap to be addressed and provides recommendations to reduce disadvantage resulting from migration and temporary visa status.

4. Development of Temporary Protection for Refugees in Australia

Prior to the 1990's, the use of temporary protection for refugees in Australia was virtually non-existent; all refugees accepted into Australia were granted permanent protection (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 19). In 1990, following the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Prime Minister Bob Hawke introduced the country's first version of temporary protection for Chinese students who were already in Australia. Those who applied for onshore protection were granted four year visas within which they were eligible for income support and other government services (Stevens, 2002, p. 874). They could also sponsor family members to come to Australia for protection and upon expiration of their visas were eligible to apply for permanent residency. In 1993 these visas were abolished and replaced with a policy that granted all persons meeting the UNHCR criteria for refugee status permanent residency (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 19).

In 1999 when the Howard Government faced growing international pressure to accept asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia, the temporary safe haven visa was introduced and holders were expected to return to their country of origin when it became safe (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 19). Thus the precedent for TPVs and SHEVs in contemporary Australia was born.

In the same period, unauthorised arrivals from the Middle East increased significantly as a result of instability and civil wars, and a lack of Australian embassies in these countries saw many persons turn to people smugglers to flee. Given its reputation as a resettlement nation, Australia was targeted and from 1999-2000 8,315 asylum seekers arrived by unauthorised means, compared to a total of just 3,950 over the 10 years prior (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 20). This spike in arrivals prompted the government to take action and implement the temporary protection policy.

5. Australian Visa Categories and Asylum Seeker Policy

5.1 Defining Refugees and Asylum Seekers

For the purposes of this report, a refugee will be defined in line with the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Per this definition, a refugee is any person

“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the

country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR, 2016).

An asylum seeker is a person who arrives in a country and applies for recognition as a refugee. These persons may have arrived legally as a visitor, tourist or student, or illegally with either fraudulent documentation or no documentation (Beer & Foley, 2003, p. 1). In Australia, an asylum seeker is classified as someone who has made an application for a TPV or SHEV. Those who arrive with valid visas are usually permitted to reside within the community while their applications for more substantive visas are processed. Those who arrive ‘illegally’ are incarcerated in Australia’s detention facilities until a visa is granted, which under current policy will be temporary (Liddy, Sanders & Coleman, 2010, p. 15).

5.2 Visa Categories and their Restrictions

Australia receives many humanitarian resettlement requests annually as a result of conflict, persecution and ongoing war in other nations. In 2011-2012, Australia received almost 43,000 applications for protection visas of which 7,038 were granted (Earnest et al., 2015, p. 1). In 2014-2015, the Humanitarian Programme offered 13,750 places to refugees and 13,756 visas were granted under this scheme; 11,009 lodged offshore and 2,747 onshore. Within the same period, a total of 62,709 requests were lodged by offshore applicants (DIBP, 2016d). The Australian Government is committed to not granting permanent protection to asylum seekers who arrived ‘illegally’. As demonstrated by Beer and Foley (2003, p. 2), immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Australia have varying status in society, as different migrant visa categories are eligible for different access to settlement services. As such, a breakdown and comparison of the visa categories and their conditions discussed in this report is essential. Please see Table 1 for a summary of visa conditions applicable to TPVs, SHEVs and Protection Visas (PVs).

Table 1: TPV, SHEV & PV Categories and their restrictions

	Temporary Protection Visa	Safe Haven Enterprise Visa	Protection Visa
Visa provision	Issued for periods of up to three years. TPV holders may apply for another TPV or SHEV when the visa expires. Holders will need to have their claims for further protection assessed to obtain another temporary visa.	Issued for periods of up to five years. SHEV holders may apply for another TPV or SHEV when the visa expires. Holders may be eligible for pathways to permanent residency. Holders will need to have their claims for further protection assessed to obtain another temporary visa.	Immediate permanent residency.
Income assistance	Access to social security benefits.	Access to social security benefits.	Access to a full range of social security benefits.
Settlement support	Access to job matching and short-term counselling for torture or trauma.	Access to job matching and short-term counselling for torture or trauma.	Access to full range of settlement support services.
Work rights	Permission to work, although ability to find employment may be impeded by temporary status.	Permission to work. Must work or engage in study in regional Australia. Work may be full time, part time, casual, or seasonal.	Permission to work and access to all employment services.
Health care	Access to Medicare.	Access to Medicare.	Access to Medicare.
Education	Access to primary and secondary education for children. Tertiary education available but not HECS.	Access to primary and secondary education for children. Tertiary education available but not HECS.	Same access to education as any other permanent resident; some additional supports available based on need.
Language training	The AMEP is a program offering free English language tuition to migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English and funded by the Department of Immigration.		
Family reunion	No rights to family reunion	No rights to family reunion	May apply to sponsor immediate family members
Overseas travel	Must obtain permission in writing for compassionate circumstances. TPV holders are not allowed to travel to the country from which they sought protection.	Must obtain permission in writing for compassionate circumstances. SHEV holders are not allowed to travel to the country from which they sought protection.	May leave and re-enter Australia.
Application cost	\$35 if lodged in Australia. No charge if lodged by applicant in detention not yet cleared by immigration.	\$35 if lodged in Australia. No charge if lodged by applicant in detention not yet cleared by immigration.	\$35 if lodged in Australia.

5.2.1 Temporary Protection Visas

TPVs are available to asylum seekers who have entered Australia by means that the government deems illegal, such as an unauthorised maritime or air arrival. The reinstating of TPVs in October 2013 has blocked those who arrived illegally from applying for permanent protection. Effectively, TPV holders have been acknowledged by the government as refugees, however offered a three-year period of asylum rather than permanent protection (DIBP, 2016a). Upon visa expiration, holders may only apply for a subsequent TPV or a SHEV.

TPV holders are able to work and study in Australia, however will be treated as full fee paying international students if enrolled in a tertiary institution. They do not have the right to family reunion and are not permitted to exit Australia without explicit government permission. Under no circumstances may the holder travel to their country of origin. Access to social security benefits is available, but the extent of this is presently unclear.

5.2.2 Safe Haven Enterprise Visas

SHEVs are the only other visa available to asylum seekers who arrived sans a valid visa. These visas carry many of the same conditions as TPVs regarding employment, education, family reunion rights, travel rights and access to social security and settlement services. One can apply for a SHEV if at least one member of the family unit on an application declares their intention to participate in work or study in a regional area.

Aside from the requirement to live regionally and the five-year validity period, the main difference between SHEVs and TPVs is that a SHEV has the potential to eventuate into a more substantive visa, however not a PV. A SHEV holder may be deemed eligible for another visa type if for a minimum of three and a half years the holder has been either:

- Employed in regional Australia and not receiving certain social security benefits
- Enrolled in full-time study in regional Australia, or
- A combination of the above (DIBP, 2015).

5.2.3 Protection Visas

A PV is a permanent visa class which grants enduring protection in Australia as a refugee. PV holders possess similar rights to any Australian citizen, such as full access to Medicare, Centrelink and employment services. HECS is also made available under this visa category, along with up to 510 hours of English language classes. A PV holder is not eligible to vote in Australian elections. Eligibility for a PV hinges on two requirements; engaging in Australia's protection obligations and having arrived in Australia legally – not as an illegal maritime arrival or unauthorised air arrival (DIBP, 2016a).

6. Resettlement Experience Findings: Impacts of a Temporary Visa Status

Research has proven that there are a wide range of negative implications caused by the temporary visa regime, which extend from the visa holders themselves to service providers and the wider community. Service providers involved in assisting TPV holders were found to be simultaneously overworked and under resourced, while the federal government shifts part of the cost burden to state and local governments and non-government organisations (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 42). Of most concern, however, remained the negative implications upon the TPV holders. According to Mann (2001), repercussions of mandatory detention and poor conditions in these facilities remained with TPV holders upon release. In fact, they were more distressed once the initial relief of being released from detention dissipated due to the impending uncertainty of their futures and strict conditions of TPVs. Individuals have related the prohibition of overseas travel on a TPV to visit family, and the denied right to family reunion as synonymous with imprisonment and the lingering possibility that the hardships faced to reach Australia may come to naught has a considerable impact on mental health (Barnes, 2003, p. 2).

The Australian government's eagerness to eliminate permanent protection for refugees and instead provide numerous temporary visa categories is reflective of a global trend to attempt to decrease the number of asylum seekers indirectly, by curbing access to work rights and social benefits (Andersson & Nilsson, 2009, p. 167). Australia's enthusiasm to follow this trend is further demonstrated in the Migration Amendment (Protection and Other Measures) Bill, passed with the purpose of transferring individuals to TPVs from other visas and in the process reducing their entitlements (*Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas* 2016). It has been proposed that nations taking this avenue of deterrence as the main tool for immigration control are verging on breaching human rights (Andersson & Nilsson, 2009, p. 172).

The problem with Australia and other nations taking the above deterrence measures is the supposition that restrictions placed on social rights will have any impact on asylum seeker arrival numbers. This ideology makes three questionable assumptions: (a) asylum seekers migrate with the social rights of the destination in mind; (b) asylum seekers have the luxury of choice of their final destination; (c) asylum seekers are privy to detailed information on

welfare benefits in numerous nations with which they use to make an informed decision (Andersson & Nilsson, 2009, p. 172). In fact, forced migration experienced by refugees prevents them from taking any of the above measures. Refugees are at a disadvantage compared to skilled or family migrants as they are very unlikely to have had the time or resources to assess the labour market and prepare to transition into it (Hugo, 2014, p. 42).

6.1 Employment

Without a doubt, employment is a pivotal aspect of settlement, not only in a financial sense but as a means to socialise and integrate with other members of the community and have a sense of purpose. Unfortunately, despite TPVs and SHEVs granting work rights, the possibility of employment remains an abstract concept for many refugees, due to a lack of support available to seek appropriate work. Oftentimes new immigrants fill jobs that are not being taken by Australians, which must be noted as an important economic contribution. However, as Hugo (2014, p. 47) asserts, “humanitarian settlers must be given every chance to get work commensurate with their skills, education and aptitude, if not initially then in the short to medium term”. He goes on to explain the four main causes of “brain waste” or unemployment among asylum seekers are discrimination, structural disadvantage, lack of qualification recognition and language barriers (2014, p. 49).

Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006, p. 203) identified the existence of labour market niches amongst recent humanitarian arrivals in low-status and low-paid jobs, including cleaning, aged care, meat processing, taxi driving, security and building. It was concluded that employers outside of these niches “have little experience with employing ‘visibly different’ recent refugees”. The lack of experience by employers in other industries contributes to the number of refugees who are in work below their level of education or qualifications. There is also hesitation by unfamiliar employers as they are unsure of TPV holders’ eligibility to work and the length of their ‘temporary’ stay in Australia (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 44). A lack of referees and work experience inhibits new migrants’ employment capabilities, as employers have no desire to “take on the perceived risks associated with employing refugees ... who have not had work experience in Australia” (Hugo, 2014, p. 42). While this problem is evident across all migrant groups, it is particularly exasperated when coupled with a temporary visa class.

In regards to addressing over-skilled migrants occupying low skill jobs, more emphasis needs to be placed on educating employers about the existing qualifications of migrants. The biggest barrier faced by skilled refugees is the skills recognition process. Aside from the fact that many refugees arrive without relevant documents and certificates of prior education, those qualifications which are recorded in humanitarian interviews are usually lost in the system and there is no system in place for documenting these skills upon arrival in Australia (Hugo, 2014, p. 43). The absence of such an essential system is a form of institutional discrimination which maintains the segmented labour market (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006, p. 221). The skills recognition system that is in place is time consuming, expensive and complex – significant preventative factors for a newly arrived asylum seeker, unlikely to possess capital and hindered by possible language difficulties. Even those with sufficient financial resources and high levels of education struggle to navigate the complex skills recognition process and subsequently take jobs incompatible with their qualifications.

6.2 Education

Strongly pertaining to the abovementioned employment disadvantages faced by new migrants is the flow-on effect to children. Whilst living in Australia on a TPV or SHEV, holders have access to tertiary education but not the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). Parents therefore work long hours in menial jobs to put their children through university, with TPV holders being liable for full international rates (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 175). Consequently, the economic contribution of refugees is most noticeable through second generation humanitarian entrants (Hugo, 2014, p. 44). This group demonstrates the extent of disadvantage caused by the isolation and exclusion faced by their parents, after being socialised in the mainstream community they enter the labour force with greater success and have more social and civic contribution (Hugo, 2014, p. 44).

6.3 Housing

The temporary nature of TPVs and SHEVs and difficulty finding employment create boundaries to finding stable accommodation. The continuity of instability after experiencing such significant upheaval is understandably distressing and establishment of a home is of vital importance to successful settlement (Mansouri & Bagnas, 2002, p. 54). Housing assistance is

provided through both government and non-government organisations, as well as community groups. Some state governments and NGO's provide support to refugees who are excluded from federally funded assistance; a flaw in the design of the system. South Australia has been involved in providing housing assistance and English language training to TPV holders excluded from federally funded assistance (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 130). Alongside the state government, the Circle of Friends and Rural Australians for Refugees community groups have made substantial contributions as refugee resettlement support services in South Australia. The impact on such groups has been significant, as they struggle to build sufficient resources to provide their essential services to rectify one of the many errors of the TPV regime (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 130). Establishing stable accommodation as soon as possible is paramount for refugees to be able to begin addressing other settlement needs, yet each year "finding affordable and adequate housing" is listed as a key concern amongst the Australian refugee community (Refugee Council of Australia, 2016b).

6.4 Health

Concerns surrounding employment, housing and other elements of settling into a new community contribute significantly to mental health issues among TPV holders in Australia. Combined with previous mental health conditions – prominent among asylum seekers as a result of experiences in their home country, journey and mandatory detention – these concerns cause TPV holders to have less success in settling compared to other migrant groups. An indefinite future in Australia is certainly responsible for feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, isolation and powerlessness (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 43). By leaving an already vulnerable group of people in a state of homelessness, the government's policies are advocating social isolation and exasperating mental anguish (Hinsliff, 2006, pp. 43-44). Temporary protection places undue stress on refugees, with research demonstrating that refugees on TPVs are highly traumatised, in danger of ongoing mental illness and have a 700 percent increase in the risk of developing depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, when compared with those granted permanent protection (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2013, p. 24).

Refugees who hold TPVs or SHEVs are denied the right to family reunion, causing further detriment to mental health and contrasting with the government's hopes for deterrence. The

prospect of never seeing family again without forfeiting their protection in Australia creates great angst and concern for TPV and SHEV holders. The absence of family reunion rights has previously pushed wives and children of asylum seekers onto boats in an effort to reunite with family members in Australia. This was demonstrated by the fact that under 1,000 IMAs applied for humanitarian protection in 1999 when TPVs were introduced and more than 4,000 applications were received in 2001 (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2013, p. 24). In October 2001, 353 asylum seekers drowned at sea on their journey to Australia, with 288 of the women and children involved found to be family members of TPV holders already in Australia, forced to make the perilous journey because government policy did not allow any safe means for reunion (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2013, p. 24).

Whilst official TPV policy upholds that upon release from detention, migrants will be provided information on applying for Medicare and Centrelink benefits in their first language, accessibility is dismal. Mansouri and Bagdas (2002, p. 53) note that once applicants lodged a request for a Medicare card, some waited up to two months to receive it. This prevented asylum seekers from seeking medical help when needed, and the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services available further deterred this vulnerable group from seeking assistance (Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002, p. 53).

7. South Australian Asylum Seeker and Refugee Discourses

The implementation of mandatory detention for asylum seekers fuels public distrust and hostility, aligning this group with criminality and creating the notion that “asylum seekers are something from which the public needs to be protected” (Archer, 2015, pp. 91-92). Klocker (2004, p. 1) identifies that a primary factor in the development of this hostility comes from government and media representations of asylum seekers, and the existence of such negative constructions paves the way for negative social implications. Notably, a connection is present between negativity towards asylum seekers in the national consciousness and the justification of harsh, exclusive legislation by the government (Klocker, 2004, p. 1).

7.1 Government Representations of Asylum Seekers

A study conducted by Klocker and Dunn (2003, p. 7) which examined terminology expressed in government documents found that the most frequently used terms portrayed asylum seekers as ‘illegitimate’, ‘illegal’, and ‘threatening’. The impact of this government rhetoric was exemplified in a study carried out in Port Augusta, South Australia. A questionnaire regarding residents’ opinions on asylum seekers yielded an 82% agreed response for ‘illegal immigrants’ and 79% for ‘unlawful’, while the more accurate term ‘refugee’ resonated with only 12% of respondents (Klocker, 2004, p. 5-6). The potency of the Federal Government’s asylum discourse constructing refugees as ‘illegitimate’ is a particularly powerful tool in gathering public support, as it wrongfully implies that asylum seekers are not legally entitled to seek protection in Australia (Klocker & Dunn, 2003, p. 7). A perpetuating cycle has been created through negative government representations fostering community antagonism and therefore high levels of support for deterrence policies and a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of refugees once granted visas (Klocker, 2004, p. 14). Difficulty settling into society, finding accommodation and engaging in employment in some ways prove to the public that their negative opinions of asylum seekers are correct, and the feedback loop continues.

Further to embedding disapproval on its shores, the Australian government has been found discouraging refugees from afar, as well. A *Wall Street Journal* columnist based in the Middle East recently reported scrolling through an online news site and coming across an embedded advertisement, while connected to a local Iraqi phone network. The advertisement shows a boat on choppy waters, with Arabic text that translates to English as “IMPOSSIBLE” (Di

Stefano, 2016). Smaller text directs readers to Australia's immigration website, which depicts additional anti-refugee messages.

7.2 Media Representations of Asylum Seekers

Considering that more people live outside of their birth country today than at any other period in history, it seems nonsensical that Australians perceptions of refugees are volatile, easily appreciable to perceived threat and quite dehumanising. Through its power to frame public discourse, the media has focused on threats that refugees pose to communities and promoted hostility in these communities (Esses et al., 2013, p. 520).

It is apparent that much of the negativity expressed by the community towards asylum seekers results from the media, as a lot of the time this is the only medium by which the public learns about this group. South Australian newspapers *The Advertiser* and *The Sunday Mail* were found to actively dehumanise refugees with exclusive language such as 'detainees' and 'boat people' frequently used (Klocker & Dunn, 2003, p. 82). While there is a degree of positivity in some media reports, such as acknowledging TPV holders' contribution to the labour force and reducing skill shortages in regional areas, this has not been weighted enough to counter the negativity (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 126).

Esses et al. (2013, p. 522) emphasize the tendency for the media to create hyperbole and dramatization in order to sell news and take advantage of the preference for negative news. This disregard for the victims of such biased reporting results in dehumanisation and the strengthening of the gap between "self" and "other". Consequently, the public is unable to allow refugees to be considered within the human group and their existing negative perceptions of asylum seekers are reinforced (Esses et al., 2013, p. 522).

Overall, Klocker and Dunn (2003, pp. 88-89) concluded that government and media representations are subject to change depending on key events, highlighting the fact that labels are malleable and changing, as they are simply cultural constructions. This is an extremely important thing to consider when pursuing recommendations in a political sphere as it demonstrates the potential for constructs surrounding asylum seekers is able to "be shifted in a positive direction if the political will to do so exists" (Klocker & Dunn, 2003, p. 89). Given that both the media and government have played a paramount role in influencing

public perceptions of refugees, it is not unreasonable to expect that the responsibility for combatting xenophobia also lies with them.

7.3 Community Perceptions of Refugees

Whilst there are numerous groups actively advocating for the closure of government detention centres and an overall improvement in Australia's treatment of refugees, a significant number of Australians maintain negative views towards refugees and asylum seekers, which hinders the transition of these groups into the community. It seems these views are inflicted by government and media representations, the spreading of false or misleading information and a lack of understanding of the issue in general.

Hinsliff (2006, p. 124) identified the Howard Government's construction of the term 'backdoor entry', popularised by emphasising the existence of a formal system of asylum through the UNHCR and implying those who arrived by boat were illegitimate. The prominence of such language has contributed to the overall negative tone of asylum seeker rhetoric, with terms such as 'boat people', 'queue jumpers' and the notion that Australia is being 'swamped by boat arrivals' dominating the public sphere. By choosing to reward refugees who apply from overseas camps and are selected to come to Australia with PVs, the government has framed those who arrive by boat as queue jumpers, and therefore justified to the public that this group are deserving of mandatory detention and only temporary protection (Hinsliff, 2006, p. 124).

Despite the frequent, widespread use of the term 'boat people', historically, only a minority of Australia's refugees have arrived as IMAs and nowadays IMAs make up only about half of Australia's annual refugee status applications (Phillips, 2015, p. 7); refer to Appendix A. Furthermore, despite the slanderous public and political attention, such as the 'stop the boats' campaign, IMAs are more likely to be deemed refugees than legal air arrivals (Phillips, 2014, p. 7). This is in dire contrast to the government's encouragement to the public that 'boat people' are illegal, when in fact, the top countries of citizenship for boat arrivals demonstrate consistently high rates of confirmation of refugee status, ranging from 88 to 100 per cent (Phillips, 2014, p. 9); refer to Appendix B. In addition, there is a lot of conversation

suggesting Australia is ‘swamped by boat arrivals’ when in reality, these numbers are very small relative to other parts of the world (Phillips, 2014, p. 11); refer to Appendix C.

There has also been circulation via email and social media in recent years claiming that refugees receive higher social security benefits than other Australian citizens, including aged pensioners. In reality, PV holders - who are permanent residents – have the same entitlements as all other residents and there are no special rates or payments for refugees (Buckmaster & Guppy, 2014, p. 4). As for TPV and SHEV holders, access to social security is available, however it is unclear to what extent. Refugees or humanitarian visa holders are exempt from the newly arrived resident’s waiting period and qualifying residence requirements as acknowledgement of the circumstances in which they have arrived in Australia with no means of financial support (Buckmaster & Guppy, 2014, p. 5).

8. Australian Government Response: Deter, Deny and Detain

The Government of Australia offers reasons for its tough stance on asylum seekers, which are important to acknowledge in this report. The size and complexity of issues surrounding asylum seekers and refugees globally present great challenges for destination countries, including Australia. There is a collective struggle in maintaining a balance between protecting borders and offering protection to displaced people (Phillips, 2015, p. 3). Upon establishment of the UNHCR in 1951 there were approximately 2.1 million refugees worldwide, while “at the end of 2013 there were an estimated 51.2 million forcibly displaced people ... including 16.7 million refugees ... close to 1.2 million asylum seekers and 33.3 million internally displaced persons” (Phillips, 2015, p. 3).

The justification of a recent decision to introduce a bill to parliament which will ban asylum seekers who arrive without a valid visa from ever being able to enter Australia is one example of the nation’s stringent approach. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced in a press conference that Australia has “one of the most generous humanitarian programs in the world” and could only retain this status while “in command of its borders” (SBS News, 2016). The government chooses to identify any person who arrives sans a visa an “illegal immigrant” which does not align with Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (United

Nations, 1948). Furthermore, the 1951 Refugee Convention forbids nations from penalising persons who arrive unauthorised if they have come directly from a territory where their rights to life or freedom were under threat. Phillips (2015, p. 4) highlights that in many instances, the only way to escape persecution is via illegal entry and obtaining official documentation is usually impracticable, if not impossible.

It is the governments classification of entry which prevents asylum seekers from being eligible for permanent Protection Visas. According to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2016), there are two types of protection visas for people who arrived 'unlawfully', TPVs and SHEVs. In fact, asylum seekers do not break any Australian laws simply by arriving without authorisation; both Australian and international law make allowances for these circumstances because entering by usual legal means is understood to be unsafe or not possible for asylum seekers (Phillips, 2015, p. 4).

9. Conclusion

As current government policies inhibit asylum seekers who arrive without a valid visa from attaining permanent protection or residency in Australia, this report has been important in examining the impact of temporary settlement and the restrictions that come with impermanence. Defining asylum seekers in an Australian context has been an important aspect as in many ways, Australia's definitions are not conducive to those provided by the UNHCR. As such, the federal government justifies its asylum seeker policies under a protective, secure borders rhetoric.

The findings of this report have documented how asylum seekers are disadvantaged by TPVs and SHEVs after leaving mandatory detention and beginning the settlement process. A nation should work to help migrants settle in to the community as best they can, not hinder this process. Currently, Australia is failing refugees which it offers protection, by extending only temporary protection with restricted benefits.

Finding employment as a migrant to a new country is challenging, however this difficulty is reinforced through barriers surrounding TPVs and SHEVs. Granting the right to work is not enough for refugees who lack support and networks, often experience extreme difficulties having prior training recognised, face language barriers and have no work experience or professional references in Australia. There is also understandable hesitation from the employers' perspective, who outside of niche industries identified by Colic-Peisker (2006), are unfamiliar with employing refugees and reluctant to risk employing somebody on a temporary visa.

The research further revealed hindrance to refugees accessing tertiary education. Although treated as regular citizens in several facets, TPV and SHEV holders are liable for full international fees when attending tertiary institutions and are not eligible for HECS. In addition, securing housing is made near impossible as a temporary visa holder and coupled with the incredible test of finding employment and inadequate federal government support services, the responsibility in assisting refugees to find suitable accommodation is left to state government and NGOs. Regarding health, the mental state of asylum seekers upon entering Australia is usually already in a poor state due to trauma experienced in their country of origin and on their journey, and further disturbances within Australia's detention facilities. Coupled with the prospect of an uncertain future and the denial of family reunion rights that comes

with TPVs and SHEVs, the necessity of access to medical care for refugees cannot be underestimated, however delays in obtaining Medicare cards and the absence of appropriate services often prevents this.

A major contribution to asylum seeker disadvantage in South Australia stems from public discourse circulated by the government and media. The government's policies of deterrence and detainment generate fear in the community with the illusion that asylum seekers are dangerous and warrant imprisonment. Furthermore, the media uses its platform as the only method many Australians learn about asylum seekers to dehumanise refugees and justify the government's tough policies in the minds of the community. Should public discourse surrounding the asylum seeker debate relent and frame this group in a more factual and constructive light, it is apparent that the refugee resettlement experience would be significantly improved.

10. Recommendations

The report advises that the Don Dunstan Foundation consider moving forward in advocating for positive change by implementing grass roots strategies. Through assessing the issue at hand the report provides recommendations while being mindful of the limited resources the foundation has access to.

1. That the foundation develops a policy position on temporary protection and make this an accessible resource to advocate for positive change.

In order to address the key areas of disadvantaged identified in this report – employment, education, housing and health – the Don Dunstan Foundation needs to develop a strong policy position as a reference. This will allow the foundation to move forward in protecting the rights of disadvantaged migrants and identifying potential policy amendments. The foundation may also consider submitting this document as a brief to Government, with the support of its partners, as a means for advocating further change.

The Don Dunstan Foundation can take a position aligned with its values and mission statement. Possible recommendations may include lobbying the government to allow TPV and SHEV holders access to HECS funding and domestic student fees so that the economic contribution of refugees is not delayed to the second generation or beyond, and parents of young people are not overworked to support their children through tertiary education. There are also many angles for the foundation to push for the abolition of temporary visas for genuine asylum seekers, mental health issues being one of the most pressing.

2. That the foundation collaborates with relevant partners, organisations and government departments to develop a Refugee Employment Register.

Research in this report demonstrates a major obstacle in settling in South Australia on a temporary visa is obtaining stable and suitable employment. The development of a Refugee Employment Register would require the cooperation of numerous bodies, however would be a highly useful tool. The purpose of the register would be to document skills and qualifications of incoming refugees on arrival in Australia, and link these refugees with relevant employers and jobs. This would function to benefit both parties, as employers will have an easily accessible document to fill industries where skill shortages are present. Furthermore, the

employment register can function as an avenue for newly arrived refugees to access unpaid work experience.

The establishment of a body to put this program into action would be ideal, as this body would aid where language barriers may be present, and function as experts in navigating the complex process of skills recognition for prior learning in Australia.

3. That the foundation build its social media presence and audience with the aim of changing the conversation surrounding asylum seekers in South Australia.

If the Don Dunstan Foundation is to have an active role in combatting negative and hostile receptions of asylum seekers by host communities in South Australia, the first step is to increase contact with the wider community. The Don Dunstan Foundation can increase its social media presence and gain followers from all demographics by becoming a more active member of the online community. The congregation of various small organisations providing online commentary in backlash of mainstream media is a practicable method to champion the citizen and change perceptions of asylum seekers from negative to positive. This will greatly assist asylum seeker settlement and intensify pressure for the government to derive smarter policy approaches.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Onshore Asylum Applications: Air and Boat Arrivals

Onshore asylum applications

Program year	Non-IMA (air arrival) Protection visa (PV) applications lodged		IMA (boat arrival) refugee status determination requests received		Total
	No.	Per cent of total applications	No.	Per cent of total applications	
2001-02	7026	76.0	2222	24.0	9248
2002-03	4959	98.8	60	1.2	5019
2003-04	3485	97.6	87	2.4	3572
2004-05	3062	95.4	146	4.6	3208
2005-06	3191	96.9	101	3.1	3292
2006-07	3723	99.4	23	0.6	3746
2007-08	3987	99.5	21	0.5	4008
2008-09	5072	88.0	678	12.0	5750
2009-10	5981	56.6	4597	43.4	10 578
2010-11	6335	55.0	5166	45.0	11 501
2011-12	7063	48.8	7373	51.2	14 436
2012-13	8480	31.6	18 365	68.4	26 845
2013-14	9646	51.5	9072	48.5	18 718

Sources: DIBP, *Asylum Trends Australia 2010-11 Annual Publication*, Canberra, 2011, p. 2; *Asylum Trends Australia 2012-13 Annual Publication*, Canberra, 2013, p. 4; and *Asylum statistics Australia: quarterly tables—June quarter 2014*, Canberra, 2014, p. 5. Note: September and December quarter 2014 statistics not available.

Appendix B: Protection Visa Grants and Refusals by Countries of Citizenship

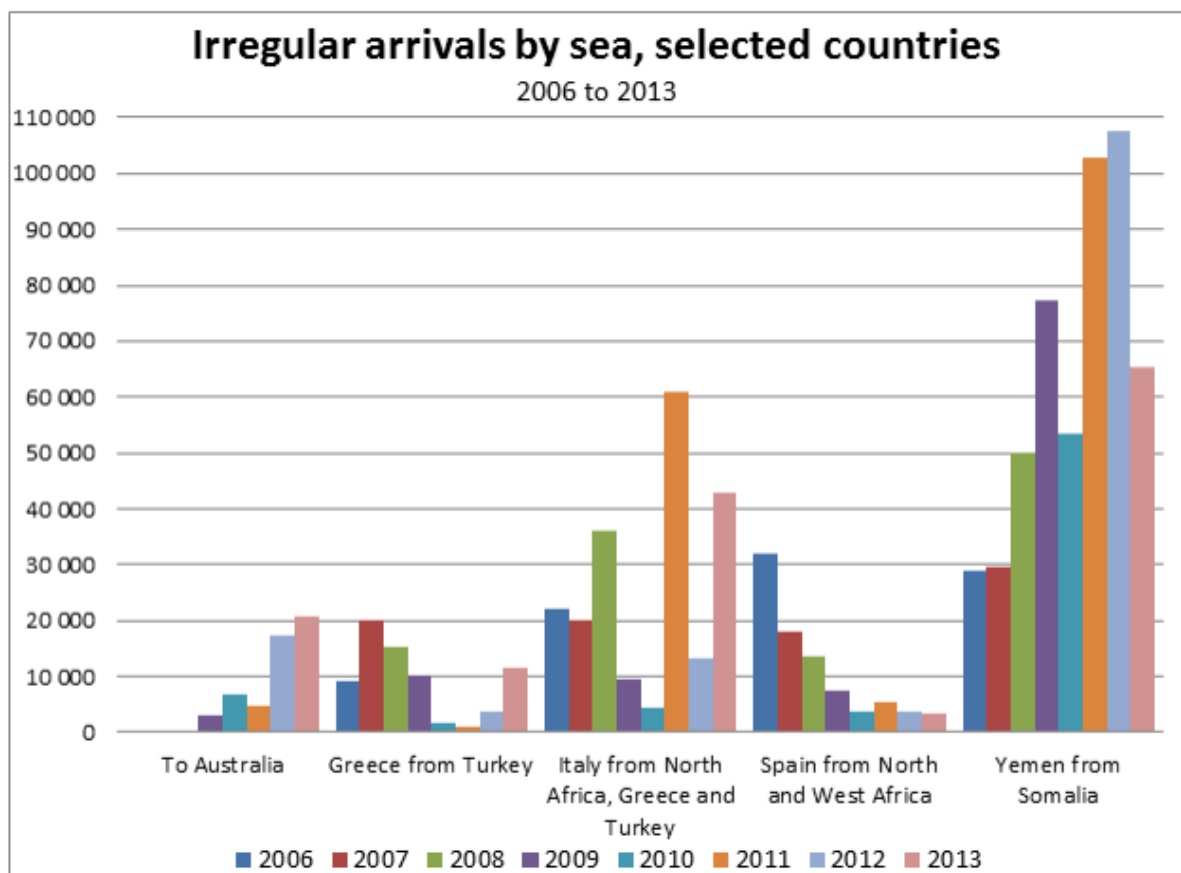
Table 34: Final Protection visa grants and refusals by top 5 countries of citizenship¹² (primary and review processes completed) (IMA)

Citizenship	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	Grants	Grant Rate	Grants	Grant Rate	Grants	Grant Rate	Grants	Grant Rate	Grants	Grant Rate
Afghanistan	176	100.0%	1440	100.0%	1336	95.9%	1972	95.9%	2352	96.0%
Iran	4	100.0%	67	100.0%	333	96.2%	1269	87.3%	1020	84.8%
Pakistan	0	na	6	85.7%	14	82.4%	94	92.2%	469	94.9%
Stateless	5	100.0%	176	100.0%	482	97.8%	628	92.4%	459	93.5%
Sri Lanka	5	100.0%	316	93.2%	241	90.3%	299	87.2%	269	52.1%
Iraq	15	100.0%	140	99.3%	255	93.8%	347	87.0%	266	83.6%
Other	4	...	7	...	60	...	157	...	114	...
Total	209	100.0%	2152	98.8%	2721	95.3%	4766	91.3%	4949	88.0%

Source: DIBP Systems

Source: DIBP, *Asylum Trends Australia 2012-13 Annual Publication*, op. cit., p. 30.

Appendix C: Boat Arrivals in Selected Countries 2006 to 2013



Parliamentary Library, data source: UNHCR, [All in the same boat: the challenges of mixed migration](#), UNHCR website.⁵⁰