



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Refugees

SPEECH

Wednesday, 9 August 2023

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 9 August 2023	Source House
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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Khalil, Peter MP	Question No.

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (09:45): I've always argued that Australia should be ambitious in our reform of our refugee policies and programs, and since my election to this place in 2016 I have advocated for that reform and for assistance for these new Australians—yes, for a more compassionate approach but also for a more effective approach, with a smarter and more effective set of policies to assist asylum seekers and refugees. The Albanese government committed to delivering these policies that make a real difference to the way that refugees are processed and resettled in Australia, and we're delivering on those commitments. We recently ended the cruel and indefinite detention of refugees on Manus and Nauru, with all those previously detained having now been released, and earlier this year, significantly, we announced the end of the temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas, with 19,000 refugees to be granted permanent residency. Many of those eligible for the resolution of status visa have applied and had these granted.

I've met with hundreds of refugees who have been on TPVs and SHEVs and I've heard their stories. Thousands of these people had been left in limbo for years under the previous government. They needed to reapply every three to five years for protection in order to remain in Australia. The system has failed this group of people. The previous government left them living effectively in limbo, but that's no more. This is a group of people who've been found to be refugees, but they were required to keep reapplying for that visa and living in limbo. Over the last 10 years, they worked here, they paid taxes and they ran businesses that employed other Australians, but, without a permanent visa, many have been left unable to get a loan to buy a house and many cannot build their own businesses further, travel or pursue further education.

We all know the evidence is there that refugees make an incredible contribution to this country. That old dog whistle they're taking welfare and all the rest of it is just not true. It is a false narrative. They make a tremendous contribution to this country. According to a recent report by Settlement Services International, our economy could benefit by over \$1 billion if we did more to harness the skills of these migrants and refugees.

This government has made promises to support this cohort, as I've said, and we've already started. We have committed to doubling Australia's annual humanitarian refugee intake. We support a humanitarian migration program that reasonably responds to international humanitarian crises as they arise. We've committed \$500 million to the work of the UNHCR. We've appointed a special envoy for refugee and asylum seeker issues to advance Australia's national interests and leadership on refugee issues within our region. We're reinstating statutory requirements for the Department of Immigration to report on how claims are processed within 90 days. We will continue this work for a more compassionate and effective policy program for assisting asylum seekers and refugees, because it is in our national interest.