

April 2026

## National Emergency Response Framework for people fleeing crisis zones

The Letter Kit is available to download at:  
<https://aran.net.au/resources/letter-writing/>  
For information about the ARAN Letter Writing Network contact: [austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:austrefugeenetwork@gmail.com)



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### WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO WRITE ABOUT THIS NOW:

Australia has a record of providing safe and orderly entry for people fleeing war and persecution in times of humanitarian crisis. Now more than ever there are increasing numbers of people fleeing war and disaster and in need of protection.

Australia's actions in the past have saved lives and significantly contributed to the international efforts. But our efforts have been inconsistent and inequitable.

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has included investing in a National Emergency Response Framework for people fleeing crisis zones in its 2026-27 pre-budget submission.

**Send a message to the Prime Minister, the Federal Treasurer, Minister for Home Affairs Tony Burke and the Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong.**  
**Send a copy to your local MP, Labor and Greens Senators in your state, and Progressive Independents.** Contact details can be found below.

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Included in this kit is the information you need to create your own letters or use the proformas

- Background notes prepared by ARAN's Letter Writing Network.
- Suggested points to mention in your letter or email to politicians
- Contact details for MPs and Senators

### Personalised letters and emails are best –

You might like to use the **AIDA** principle in drafting your letter

- **A - Attention** - grab the recipient's attention. Say something positive about the reader that is directed towards the focus of your letter. Stimulate the recipient's curiosity
- **I - Interest & Information**- encourage the recipient to read on.
- **D - Desire** - Getting the reader to want to do what you are seeking - in their interest to do so.
- **A - Action**- inform the reader of the action you want them to take.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over time, Australia has issued at least 25 different visa types to assist people in humanitarian emergencies. The Kaldor Centre policy brief outlines them all and argues that it does not need to be this complicated.

For some people escaping these conflicts, travel to Australia has been relatively easy; for others, impossible. Some people who reach Australia have rights to work, study, healthcare and support, while others are barely surviving.

There is a need to develop a national humanitarian crisis response framework that provides a fair, equitable and consistent approach to these situations. This is currently a notable gap in Australian refugee policy and humanitarian efforts. The Australian government should streamline its humanitarian crisis response with a new, dedicated emergency visa, according to a new policy brief from the Evacuations Research Hub at UNSW's Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law.

While it is not a comprehensive account of Australia's response, the examples below illustrate the inconsistency in the government's approaches to recent humanitarian crises.

- **Syria and Iraq, 2015**  
Australia committed to resettle 12,000 people fleeing wars in Syria and Iraq, in addition to the regular annual refugee intake.
- **Afghanistan, 2022**  
Australia allocated 26,500 places over 4 years for people fleeing the Taliban, and earmarked \$27.1 million over 2 years for Settlement Support Packages for evacuees.
- **Ukraine, currently**  
Originally issued visitor visas, evacuees from Ukraine were transitioned to temporary humanitarian and then permanent visas. Ukrainian community organisations were granted up to \$1million to support displaced Ukrainians. According to Paul Power, CEO of RCOA, the government's response to the war in Ukraine set a new precedent in allowing the Australian Ukrainian community to successfully advocate for permanent pathways, access to work rights and education for Ukrainian refugees.
- **Gaza /Israel, currently**  
People fleeing the war in Gaza/Israel were granted temporary humanitarian visas and expedited processing. The Australian government allocated \$50 million for community mental health, safety, and cohesion, and funded community organisations to provide emergency financial relief for temporary visa holders.

These responses show that Australia is capable of quick, compassionate response to crises. However, there are concerns about the inequities and inefficiencies of the disparate approaches. The ad hoc nature of those efforts has resulted in a lack of durable solutions for evacuees, and gaps in post-arrival support for refugees and communities.

Australia needs a clear strategy for predictable and equitable government and community response to international humanitarian crises and forced displacement. The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has developed a set of principles on which Australia's national crisis response policy should be based. These are:

**Safe Emergency Pathways** –safe emergency visa pathways are made available as soon as the Australian Government announces a humanitarian crisis or disaster

**Timeliness and Accessibility** – Government response is quick and barriers to visa application processes are reduced for displaced and highly vulnerable people, e.g. visa fees, documentation requirements etc.

**Durability and Flexibility** – Safe and durable solutions are offered to evacuees, and processes have flexibility to tailor approaches to the circumstances. This includes flexibility

when emergency evacuation is needed, and in transitioning from a temporary visa to permanency when a return to the country of origin is not safe or desirable.

**Additionality** – Emergency responses are additional to the annual refugee program – it is unfair to disadvantage those in the humanitarian visa queue by reducing the annual refugee allocation to accommodate crises.

**Settlement support and a safety net** – Adequate post-arrival support is provided in cooperation with the settlement service sector, including a social and financial safety net, e.g. access to social security, health, services, education, employment support.

**Partnership with multicultural and diaspora communities** – Government works in partnership with diaspora and refugee-led communities during the crisis response.

**Transparency and Communication** – Australia’s response to a humanitarian crisis must be clearly communicated to the public and to key communities and organisations involved in the response.

We are calling on the Albanese Government to:

- Establish a principled framework for the Australian Government’s response to humanitarian crises
- Design the framework so that it guides all phases of the evacuation process from initial assessment to long-term settlement
- Partner with diaspora communities, settlement service providers, and community support agencies in the design and implementation of the framework.
- Have a defined framework in place will allow a more equitable and timely response and save lives.

## References

- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-27-Pre-Budget-Submission-RCOA.pdf>
- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/learning-australias-response-ukraine/>
- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/RCOA-Submission-on-the-Humanitarian-Program-2024-25.pdf>
- The Kaldor Centre for Refugee Law:  
[www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/law/kaldor/2024-09-policy-brief-15](http://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/law/kaldor/2024-09-policy-brief-15)

## SAMPLE LETTER

*It's recommended that you tweak this letter to make it a unique letter*

Dear Prime Minister Minister/Treasurer/ Labor Senators / Local member

I am writing in advance of the May 2026 budget announcement, to support the need for a national emergency response policy for humanitarian crises. Australia has a history of providing humanitarian visas for people fleeing war and disaster in times of crisis. Now, more than ever, these events are increasing in severity and frequency. We must not turn away from this humanitarian obligation.

Despite Australia's significant contributions for people fleeing humanitarian crises, our response has been ad hoc and resulted in inequities, and a lack of durable solutions and post-arrival support for refugees. This has resulted in some cohorts receiving comprehensive support while others are reliant on charities and barely surviving

A mandated policy for our response to humanitarian crises would facilitate a speedier and more effective, equitable response. Australia has a proud history of being responsive in times of crisis – most recently the crises in Gaza, Ukraine, Afghanistan and previously in Syria and other conflicts. Such crisis allocations should be in addition to the annual quota for humanitarian visas.

In times of crisis, refugees may encounter barriers in terms of documentation and fees. On arrival in Australia, refugees may have access to none of the requirements for a temporary or prolonged stay,

To enable Australia to respond promptly in crisis situations, there is a need for a defined policy that can expedite evacuation, streamline the visa application process, and provide reception facilities and support on arrival in Australia, including medical support, education and work rights.

There also needs to be provision for short term visa holders where their visa is nearing expiration when a humanitarian crisis erupts. Provision for permanency needs to be considered in situations where refugees are unable to return to the country of origin because of active conflict.

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), the key umbrella organization for refugee advocacy, has worked with The Kaldor Centre for Refugee Law to create a draft policy for consideration. RCOA has included this issue in its [\*Response to the Australian Government Discussion Paper on the 2024-25 Humanitarian Program\*](#). Such a policy would enable the Government to respond quickly, and in a more organized and equitable manner to support people facing forced displacement at the onset of humanitarian crises. It would provide a less stressful experience for refugees who are already traumatized, and lead to a smoother transition should it become clear a return to country of origin is not possible.

I ask that you support the creation of such a policy and funding for its development and provide political and moral leadership to help Australians understand our international obligations under the UN Refugee Convention, and to recognise the substantial contributions to our community by the more than a million people who have arrived here as refugees.

Sincerely yours

*Add Your name and address*

## **POLITICIANS to write to: CONTACT DETAILS:**

### **If posting letters:**

Prime Minister: PO Box 6022, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Minister Tony Burke: PO Box 6022, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Members of the House of Representatives: PO Box 6022, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senators: PO Box 6100, Parliament House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

Your local MP – find their electoral office address at [Search for individual MPs & Senators here](#)

### **Sending your letter by email:**

- Prime Minister: [Use the contact form for PM](#)
- Treasurer: The Hon Jim Chalmers: [Contact form for Federal Treasurer](#)
- Foreign Minister: Senator the Hon Senator Penny Wong  
[senator.wong@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.wong@aph.gov.au)
- Minister Home Affairs, The Hon Tony Burke: [tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au)
- Assistant Minister Immigration, The Hon Matt Thistlethwaite  
[Matt.Thistlethwaite.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Matt.Thistlethwaite.MP@aph.gov.au)
- To find details for individual MPs and Senators use this link to [Search for individual MPs & Senators on the Parliament House website](#)
- You might find this listing helpful: [Listing of all MPs and Senators Sept 2025](#). Please download the spreadsheet if you want to sort etc for your own use. This spreadsheet was updated in Sept 2025. If you find any errors, please email [info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au](mailto:info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au) and we'll make corrections.

### **Progressive Independents**

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### **Senators by State**

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