Migration and Immigration

**Immigration**

Immigration involves the movement of people into a country on a permanent basis. These migratory movements add to the ethnic and cultural diversity and affect demographic, economic and social dynamics of a nation. There are three key categories of immigrants in Australia: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

**Migrant**

A migrant is a person who leaves their country of origin voluntarily to seek a better life for a range of personal and/or economic reasons. Migrants have made the choice to leave, had the chance to plan and prepare for migration and can generally return any time.

**Refugee**

The United Nations (UN) 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Australia is a signatory, defines refugees as people who “are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence and are unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion...” (Human Rights Commission, 2008)

**Asylum Seeker**

An Asylum Seeker is a person who has applied for recognition as a refugee under the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees but whose cause has yet to be determined. The majority of asylum seekers who arrive in Australia with permission to enter (e.g. they arrive on a student or visitor visa). Some arrive without authorisation for a range of reasons (e.g. lack of access to documentation). The term ‘Illegals’ has been incorrectly used to describe those who have arrived in Australia without prior authorisation. It is legal to seek protection from persecution according to Australian and international law, regardless of the means of arrival. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (Human Rights Commission, 2008)

Depending on their method of travel to Australia, asylum-seekers will either live in a community with bridging visas or will be held in detention while their case for protection is being decided. Asylum-seekers living in the community have varied rights to work or study and access to Medicare and income support. Some will have no access to these entitlements (Refugee Council of Australia 2011).

**Australia’s Immigration Programs**

Australia has two immigration programs that allow people to come and live in Australia. One is called the migration program and the other the humanitarian program. The planning level for the 2010-2011 migration program was 168,700 places. The humanitarian program was 13,750 places (Australian Government, 2011).

**Migration Program**

The migration program accepts ‘skilled migrants’ to live in Australia. Skilled migrants are people who have a profession or trade that could be of benefit to Australian society. Under the migration program people may also be accepted to live in Australia if they have family or children who are Australians. Migrants are selected under the migration program in three streams: skill, family and special eligibility.
Humanitarian Program

The humanitarian program offers resettlement to refugees and ‘others in humanitarian need’ who have suffered discrimination resulting in serious violation of their human rights. Australia has a long history of resettling refugees and humanitarian entrants. Since Federation, Australia has offered places to more than 750,000 refugees and those in need. The humanitarian program meets the needs of some of Australia’s obligations to provide protection under international law and is divided into ‘onshore’ and ‘offshore’ streams.

The offshore (resettlement) component offers resettlement to people outside of Australia who are in need of humanitarian aid. People who come to Australia under the offshore stream are recognised as ‘refugees’ or ‘special humanitarian entrants’ before arriving in Australia. They have often spent many years in a third country or in refugee camps.

The special humanitarian program is designed to help people who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to a serious violation of their human rights in their home country. People who are accepted as special humanitarian entrants through the offshore program must be living outside their country of origin and have a ‘proposer’ in Australia who covers their airfares and helps them adjust to Australian culture. They are not technically refugees according to the UN definition; however they may have been subject to similar experiences.

The offshore (asylum or protection) component of the humanitarian program offers protection to people who are already in Australia when they apply for protection (e.g. asylum seekers who arrive by boat or plane). Asylum seekers must meet the refugee definition in The United Nations Convention to be offered onshore protection. (Refugee Council of Australia, 2011 and Australian Government, 2011b&d).

THE REFUGEE JOURNEY

Go to the SBS website ‘GO BACK To Where You Came From: www.sbs.com.au/shows/goback
This site has information about the 2011 SBS television series which challenged six “ordinary Australians” to confront their preconceived views about refugees and asylum seekers.

1) Select the ‘About’ tab and read the background information concerning the series.
2) Select the ‘Factsheets’ tab and read the material about the refugee and asylum seeker experience.
4) Complete tasks 1, 2 and 3.
5) At home, play the game ‘Exit Australia’ http://www.sbs.com.au/asylumexitaustralia/ You will not be able to access it appropriately at school (Yes, it’s HOMEWORK!) We will discuss it in class later.

This is the first picture that came up when your teacher Googled ‘Refugee’.

This was the first result that came up for ‘Migrant’. See the difference?