

REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SUNDAY 30 AUGUST 2009

MIGRANTS

Migrants are people who have moved to a different place in search of better life opportunities. Apart from its indigenous peoples, Australia is a country of immigrants. After the Second World War thousands of people came here, both as refugees and as migrants – these were particularly from the British Isles, Italy and Greece, and they contributed greatly to the colourful and cultural mix which we now take for granted.

General voluntary migration has been scaled down in recent decades, and most migrants now come to Australia under the Skilled Migration Program, which sets quotas and seeks people who can contribute skills which are in short supply here.

The 2009 – 2010 Budget announced that there would be 108,100 places in this year's program. There are three categories in the program:

- The employer-sponsored pathway, where skilled migrants are sponsored into jobs that cannot be filled locally. Most of those granted an employer-sponsored visa are already in Australia working on a temporary visa.
- The government-sponsored pathway, where applicants are sponsored by state or territory governments to address skill shortages specific to the jurisdiction.
- The independent skilled pathway, where applicants are not sponsored and do not necessarily have a job to come to. There are fewer places in this category this year, and higher standards for English competence and job readiness are being imposed as people in this category have to compete in the local labour market. They do not have the same support services as refugees receive, and they have to find their own way to accommodation, community services and employment.

Further information from www.immi.gov.au

Have you had the experience of changing countries, or being a stranger in a new community? If so, you will remember how much you valued friendly help and kind human contact.