

Current facts

Detained in Australia

At 30 September 2020

There were 1534 people in immigration detention facilities, including 1350 in immigration detention on the mainland and 184 in immigration detention on Christmas Island. Two of these are children.

Of these, 229 had been in detention for more than three years, including 99 more than five years. The average time to date is 581 days.

A further 543 people were living in the community after being approved for a residence determination* (including 189 children), and 12,579 people seeking asylum who came by boat were living in the community after grant of a Bridging E Visa. (It is a sad fact that such people are still officially described by the Home Affairs Department as “Illegal Maritime Arrivals”.)

*Usually referred to as community detention

Hardly anyone is in community detention for less than a year, 463 have been for more than a year and a half, including 200 for more than three years.

Above information taken from the Department of Home Affairs
<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/immigration-detention-statistics-30-september-2020.pdf>

Government policy and practice

By Australian law, people who arrive by sea or air without a valid visa, or who overstay their visa, must be detained. There is no time limit on the length of detention.

Papua New Guinea and Nauru Since the start of offshore processing, many organisations including UNHCR and Amnesty International have reported on the harsh living conditions, substandard services, and the physical and mental health impacts of indefinite detention. Similar effects occur even when the people seeking asylum are not actually in a detention centre but are refused asylum and have no certainty about their future.

In community detention people can move freely, but must live at an address specified by the Minister for Immigration and need permission to spend a night elsewhere. They are subject to curfews and other supervision arrangements.

Bridging Visa Es allow people to live in the community while their protection claims are being decided. Most people on these visas have access to Medicare. In the past, most also received a basic living allowance but access to this SRSS is now more restricted.

