

## **Letter writing opportunity – Employers**

**Are you an employer? Are you willing to write to your local federal MP in support of refugees on temporary protection visas?**

**Or do you know an employer who may be willing to do this?**

There are 20,000 refugees in Australia who continue to live on either a 3 year Temporary Protection Visa or a 5 year Safe Haven Enterprise Visa. After being in Australia for 9 years, living on a temporary protection visa means not being able to access the many government supports and services that only citizens and permanent visa holders can access.

This includes not being eligible to apply to get their partner and children to join them in Australia, even if their families are living in situations of danger. These are families who have been forced to live apart for nearly a decade, including many Afghan refugees on temporary protection visas who have not been able to access Australia's family reunion programs to get their wives and children to Australia. All of their families are now in situations of great danger.

The vast majority of refugees in Australia on temporary protection visas have been employed and paying taxes for years, and some have their own businesses. A permanent visa would mean they could access what they need to get on with their lives. Now, given COVID-19 and the ongoing uncertainty about a return to “business as usual” for many industries, and the economy as a whole, there are very sound economic arguments for granting permanency for all refugees who remain on temporary protection visas. For example, it would allow them to secure a bank loan to buy their own home and invest in their business.

You can find all the details in this [recent report \(https://apo.org.au/node/314128\)](https://apo.org.au/node/314128) which details the economic benefits to Australia of granting permanency and family reunion to refugees on temporary visas.

It recommends the Australian Government create a stream for temporary protection visa holders in an existing skilled visa, which would allow them to live and work in Australia permanently with their families.

**Would you be willing to write to your local federal MP about this?**

If so, please refer to our draft letter to guide you in what to say. And if you would like some further assistance with this, please let us know.

Caroline Fleay

Email - [C.Fleay@curtin.edu.au](mailto:C.Fleay@curtin.edu.au)

*On behalf of the Permanency and Family Reunion Network*

## Sample letter an employer could send to an MP:

Dear *[name of MP]*

I am an employer of *[insert number]* of people in the *[insert name]* industry. I know the benefits to both employers and employees when people who are committed to living and working in Australia are given a permanent visa. This includes refugees.

Refugees in Australia who have been living and working here for more than 9 years need permanent residency and they need to get their immediate families to Australia. As the recent report "[Supporting Economic Growth in Uncertain Times](#)" shows, there are clear economic benefits to Australia in making this happen.

More than 20,000 refugees who arrived in Australia by boat 8-10 years ago have been granted a temporary protection visa – either a five-year Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) or a three-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV). While a SHEV holder may become eligible for permanent residence if they meet the SHEV pathway requirements, these requirements have proven to be impossible to reach for the vast majority of people holding this visa. There is no pathway to permanency for TPV holders.

Now is the time to give this group more certainty by moving them onto permanent visas that allows them to reunite with their families. The vast majority of people on these visas have been employed and paying taxes for years in Australia, many with sought-after experience in industries with labour shortages such as construction. Some have their own businesses.

Given COVID-19 and the ongoing uncertainty about a return to “business as usual” for many industries, and the economy as a whole, there are very sound economic arguments for granting permanency and reuniting families for all refugees who remain on temporary protection visas in Australia. For example, being on a permanent visa means people will be able to upgrade their skills by accessing relevant studies and qualifications at affordable rates, and access loans to grow their own businesses and employ other workers.

The Australian Government needs to allow TPV and SHEV holders to access a residency pathway – this can be done through creating a stream for TPV and SHEV holders in an existing skilled visa. This would allow them to live and work in Australia permanently. You can find more on this solution in the report "[Supporting Economic Growth in Uncertain Times](#)" [<https://apo.org.au/node/314128>]

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you soon, please let me know when would be a suitable time.