



## **Submission No. 4**

### **Review of Portfolio Annual Reports**

Organisation: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and  
Indigenous Affairs

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## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE HEARING – 21 May 2002



### IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

#### Output 1.2: Refugee and Humanitarian Entry and Stay

Mr Edwards: (FADT 86-87) asked:

I raised the question of the Montagnard people in Thailand. I understand that there are about 1,100 Vietnamese people who have been stranded in some sort of camp in the Philippines for a couple of decades. I understand that there is still an impasse: the Vietnamese authorities do not want them back. I wonder whether any of those Vietnamese people in the Philippines have applied to come to Australia. Is it possible to find that out? I am particularly interested in those who may already have families in Australia.

*Answer:*

- Australia was generous in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Vietnam. More than 155,000 people from Vietnam have been resettled in Australia since the end of the conflict in 1975. This includes 18,000 as part of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) for Indo-Chinese refugees.
- The CPA was established to determine who were refugees and in need of resettlement and those who were not refugees and could return to Vietnam. Over 120,000 Vietnamese who were assessed as not being refugees have returned to Vietnam. Members of this group of remaining Vietnamese in the Philippines were, as part of the CPA process, assessed as not being refugees and could return to Vietnam.
- Following representation from the Vietnamese community in Australia, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs agreed to make available, under the Humanitarian Program, a small number of places for Vietnamese who remain in the Philippines and who have close relatives in Australia.
- 47 Special Humanitarian Program places were allocated for this caseload during the 2001-2002 program year. Applications have been considered and assessed on a case by case basis.
- Vietnamese community leaders in Australia identified a list of possible applicants and encouraged them to apply at the Australian Embassy in Manila.

- As at 31 May 2002, 47 applications has been received and 42 visas have been issued this program year. Applications for a further 5 persons will be finalised in the near future. All applications on hand have been processed.
- A small number of places will be allocated for next program year and the Australian Vietnamese community representatives are seeking and encouraging more eligible applicants to apply.
- The Australian Embassy in Manila has recently advised that according to representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) based in the Philippines, Vietnamese nationals in the Philippines have social outcomes equal to or better than local Filipinos. They are socially accepted; most are employed or running businesses; their children attend schools or universities and they are financially better off than many of their Filipino counterparts. Neither the UNHCR nor the IOM has humanitarian concerns regarding the Vietnamese people residing in the Philippines.
- This caseload is not identified by UNHCR as one requiring resettlement.
- There is currently a draft Bill before the Philippines Senate proposing to formalise the residency status of the Vietnamese nationals in the Philippines.