



Media release

Senator Chris Evans

Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

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Rudd Government scraps Temporary Protection visas

The Rudd Government has fulfilled another election commitment by abolishing the unjust Temporary Protection visa (TPV) regime for asylum seekers set up by the previous government.

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, said that from early 2008-09, people found to be refugees will receive a permanent visa, regardless of their mode of arrival.

Under arrangements put in place by the former government, unauthorised arrivals who were owed protection under Australia's international obligations were only eligible for TPVs in the first instance.

It meant that refugees had no travel rights, reduced access to refugee settlement services such as English language programs, employment and income assistance, and could not be reunited with other family members.

About 1000 refugees currently in Australia on TPVs will now have their status resolved and will be afforded the same benefits and entitlements as holders of a Permanent Protection visa.

"Provided they meet security and character requirements, they will be granted permanent residency in Australia and will not need to have their protection claims reassessed," Senator Evans said.

"The Temporary Protection visa was one of the worst aspects of the Howard government's punitive treatment of refugees, many of whom had suffered enormously before fleeing to Australia.

"There is clear evidence that the TPV arrangements did nothing to prevent unauthorised boat arrivals and, in fact, arrival numbers increased not long after the regime was introduced.

"Another disturbing effect of such harsh visa conditions was that more women and children risked their lives with people smugglers on leaky boats.

"The scrapping of the TPV fulfils the Rudd Government's commitment to providing refugees with a fair and certain outcome."

As a result of the abolition of the TPV regime, any existing Temporary Protection visa or Temporary Humanitarian visa holder will be processed for permanent residency in Australia.

Senator Evans said the measure would not compromise the Government's commitment to protecting Australia's borders.

"Unauthorised boat arrivals will continue to be detained and processed at Christmas Island," Senator Evans said.

"The Government is firmly committed to maintaining strong border security measures and we will continue to enhance our efforts to combat people smuggling to Australia, in particular by working with other countries in the region," the Minister added.

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