

Eligibility criteria update for the Reconnect and Asylum Seeker VET Programs

Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visa

Expansion of the eligibility criteria in the Reconnect and Asylum Seeker VET (ASVET) programs to include those on Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visas.

What is the Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visa?

449 visas are typically granted to people who are forced to flee their home country or are likely to be displaced. They are only granted at invitation from the Federal Minister for Immigration.

Why are these visa holders being included?

Following the recent unrest in Afghanistan, the Australian Government announced an initial 3,000 humanitarian places to be allocated to Afghan nationals in August 2021. Victoria will be assisting a total of 2,164 of these 3,000 humanitarian places. In January 2022, the Australian Government announced that they will be providing a total of 15,000 places for Afghan nationals, through the Humanitarian and Family Visa programs over four years.

The 2022 VET Funding Contract has been amended to include Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visas. This has come into effect as of 1 January 2022.

The 449 visa holders have been included in the eligibility criteria for the ASVET program and the Reconnect program, to ensure those arriving in Victoria are provided equitable opportunities to access education and training, in addition to other state and federal government supports.

Who will be the recipients of the 449 visas?

The government will focus on assisting Afghan nationals, family members of Australians, persecuted minorities such as women and girls, children, and other vulnerable groups.

Where can 449 visa holders access support to education and training?

449 visa holders can access various supports to education and training through the ASVET and Reconnect programs. They can also self-enrol at private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), Learn Local (LL) providers, TAFEs and government contracted RTOs.

The ASVET program increases access to *Skills First* training, (including Free TAFE for priority courses) for eligible asylum seekers by:

- providing an exemption from the citizenship/permanent residency requirement; and
- a fee concession entitlement, regardless of whether the student holds a concession card.

How can 449 visa holders access education and training?

449 visa holders will be able to access education and training through ASVET and Reconnect programs.

Access to these two programs will enable eligible asylum seekers to engage in supported education and training with a pathway towards employment upon arrival in Victoria. This will increase their ability to settle in the community, develop economic independence and participate in Australian society.

ASVET program

The ASVET program provides eligible asylum seekers and refugees granted temporary residence an exemption from the usual citizenship/residency eligibility criteria required for participation in a Government-subsidised *Skills First* training course.

Additional funding is allocated to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) to carry out the support element of the program. Through this additional funding, the ASRC undertakes activities that further supports the capacity and capability development of the sector, ensuring the TAFEs, RTOs and Learn Local providers that work with eligible asylum seekers have the awareness, skills and understanding to deliver appropriate and customised responses to the cohort. This will ultimately result in increased enrolments and completions, improved student experience and greater supported training pathways to further study and employment.

Further details on the program and the supports on offer to asylum seekers, can be found on the department [website](#).

Reconnect Program

The Reconnect program is designed to support Victorians experiencing disadvantage. The program assists participants to overcome the barriers preventing them from engaging in education, training and employment and provides support into further study or employment pathways.

The program is funded to support over 1,700 participants each year, by providing wrap-around supports and interventions that aim at addressing non-vocational barriers that impact a person's ability to reach their participation potential. Asylum seekers, refugees and recent migrants have now been included in the eligibility for Reconnect and are still able to receive the usual subsidies of the ASVET program, as well as acquire further supports offered through the Reconnect program. These supports ensure that learners and participants from eligible asylum seeker backgrounds

have the same access and supports to complete their educational goals and further support their independence.

For further information on the program, including a list of providers and contact details, please see [here](#).

Further information

449 visa

For further information regarding the Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visa, please see the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs [website](#) detailing the most recent updates.