Skilled stream

These are highly skilled migrants who have been accepted by the Australian Government because they have good English language ability, and work experience. In 2008–09, 114,777 people migrated to Australia in the skilled stream (67 per cent of all new settlers).

Lay Htoo

I grew up in a remote area of Myanmar. Since I was a teenager I hoped to study overseas but for different reasons I was not able. However, I did get a job with an aid and development organisation and it was a life changing experience for me. I met many people in need and I was able to help relieve some of their pain.

My wife is a nurse and together we migrated to Australia in 2007 on skilled migrant visas. We were attracted to Australia for a few reasons. Firstly, we hoped to get a better education for our children in Australia. Secondly, I wanted a different experience of aid and development work than I was used to in my country. Thirdly, my wife believes she has a better work and life balance as a nurse in Australia. Finally, we believe we have better chances to support our families back in Myanmar.

During these years in Australia, we are struggling to adapt to the new culture while we are building our own family at the same time. We now enjoy our work and our two-year-old daughter is enjoying her day care. Now, we are expecting another baby!

Humanitarian program

As a member of the international community, Australia shares responsibility for protecting refugees — people who have been forced to leave their home country and cannot return because of war, famine or persecution. This program has two functions — it offers protection to people already in Australia who are found to be refugees (onshore protection) and it offers resettlement to refugees overseas (offshore resettlement). In 2008–09, Australia accepted 13,507 people in this program — 11,010 were processed outside of Australia (offshore) and 2,497 were processed here in Australia (onshore). This is less than one per cent of all new settlers in 2008–09.

Violeta Veliz

I came to Australia in 1976 after three years of military rule in Chile. Under General Pinochet, the elected government was overthrown and many people who disagreed with him were killed or taken to prison. We lost the right to freedom and the right to vote. We lost the right to speak freely and the right to meet with other people. We could not go out at night time.

I married my husband in 1974 and we agreed to leave Chile because it was too dangerous. I cried rivers of tears. I wanted to fight the government but it was impossible to fight against the army with their tanks and guns. We had to leave all our family in Chile and everything had to be done in secret because the secret police were looking at what people were doing. It was very hard to leave my family.

When we arrived in Australia, it was great because we were safe. We have freedom to meet with other people and we can do and believe what we want. We received a lot of help and we were able to learn English and find work. We were able to meet with others who had come from Chile and help the newer refugees. We were also able to speak up for human rights and help people be more aware of what was happening in Chile.

We have raised two girls here and while we never forget Chile, we are happy here.