

**Submission to the Department of Home Affairs  
Discussion Paper - Australia's Humanitarian  
Program 2024-25**

**7 June 2024**

Submitted by the

**Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations**



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION  
OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS

## 1 About the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations

The [Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations](#) (AFUO) is the peak body for [22 national Ukrainian community organisations](#) throughout Australia. It is widely regarded as the representative voice on matters concerning the Ukrainian community in Australia.

Member organisations include churches, state community organisations and associations, youth and women’s organisations, credit co-operative movement, educational, returned service, language and other organisations. The Board comprises executive members who represent key facets of community life in Australia.

The AFUO is a member of the Ukrainian World Congress, the peak body for Ukrainian organisations in the diaspora. The AFUO also maintains strong links with Ukraine and works closely with the Embassy of Ukraine in Australia.

## 2 Overview and Summary of Recommendations

### 2.1 Overview

The AFUO is grateful for the opportunity to provide this submission. The AFUO and its member organisations are well placed to provide the submission, having witnessed first-hand the trauma-inflicted suffering of displaced Ukrainians and the families of our community members. AFUO member organisations have been deeply involved in both the local Ukrainian community’s response to supporting displaced Ukrainians seeking safe refuge in Australia, as well as working with both state and federal governments to coordinate support for Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Based on this experience, our submission will review and provide recommendations on the following two areas of consideration, with a particular focus on the experience of the Ukrainian cohort and the concerns they currently hold:

- *How can the Humanitarian Program better respond to future resettlement crises?*
- *How can Australia best support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants to make strong contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity?*

The AFUO attaches as a Supplementary Submission a detailed review of the issues mentioned in our overview and summary. This review was completed by displaced Ukrainians, and the AFUO is thankful for their efforts.

### 2.2 Summary of Recommendations

A summary of our recommendations is below:

*How can the Humanitarian Program better respond to future resettlement crises?*

1. Engage immediately and effectively with representative community organisations of affected cohorts to ensure community “buy in” and support.
2. Establish clear communication protocols with community organisations and issue frequent communication **in conjunction** with community organisations to inform affected cohorts and reduce misinformation and potential exploitation.
3. Conduct a retrospective study with community engagement for the period February 2022 to October 2022 to identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement.
4. Plan a new process for dealing with resettlement crises, including community support networks on a state-by-state basis.

*How can Australia best support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants to make strong contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity?*

1. Extend the subclass 786 Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas for displaced Ukrainians for a further 3 years to remove immediate stress

2. Develop dedicated pathways for permanent residency for displaced Ukrainians, in consideration of the barriers that many of the Ukrainian cohort face
3. Expand access to other humanitarian programs for Ukrainians
4. Expand relative sponsorship criteria for family visas in humanitarian cases (e.g. siblings, cousins etc)
5. Provide accelerated family reunification pathways for split families

### 3 How can the Humanitarian Program better respond to future resettlement crises?

#### 3.1 Observations

Australia’s immigration policies for displaced Ukrainians have been inconsistent and confusing, posing significant challenges for those seeking refuge. This uncertainty has also created opportunities for exploitation of a vulnerable cohort of people by unscrupulous operators and migration agents.

The initial refugee pathway for displaced Ukrainians into Australia was announced in late February 2022. It involved an administratively cumbersome process transitioning through three visa subclasses. Minimal documentation was available on this process, with the AFUO preparing and disseminating information to the family members of those in Ukraine who wished to seek safe refuge in Australia.

Unfortunately, this program was unexpectedly terminated on 4 July 2022 without notice or consultation with the Ukrainian community, with only a brief extension to 31 July 2022 provided for Ukrainians to make their way to Australia to accept this offer. Since 1 August 2022, the only “Humanitarian” pathways open to Ukrainians that are not able to obtain a regular temporary or permanent residence, work or study visa are to apply to the [Talent Beyond Boundaries](#) program if offshore, or to arrive on a Visitor visa and [either apply](#) for a subclass 866 Protection visa and survive indefinitely on a subclass 010 Bridging Visa A, or wait until the expiration of their Visitor visa, become unlawful and then apply for a subclass 050 Bridging Visa E until such time as the war in Ukraine ends. This unfit-for-purpose set of pathways disregards the reality that many Ukrainians that have arrived in Australia have had their homes destroyed, have been displaced multiple times, and have experienced great cruelty and barbarism under Russian occupation.

For split families which seek to reunite following 1 August 2022, any additional family members that arrive in Australia find themselves on a different visa pathway to their families on subclass 786 visas, resulting in varying levels of support, eligibility for work and study, and differing lengths of stay. In addition, the three year validity of the subclass 786 visa is nearing the end, and the lack of communication from the Department of Home Affairs regarding next steps is causing considerable distress to visa holders who are concerned that they will either be deported or transferred to a Bridging Visa E (thanks in part to misinformation efforts of OMARA registered migration agents capitalising on the panic to increase their client list).

In the six months post February 2022, in order to fast track visa grants, lower amounts of due diligence checks were performed on visa applications for Ukrainians. Unfortunately, this resulted in a number of situations where the rapid visa granting could be exploited for profit, crime, trafficking or other non-humanitarian migration. Feedback was also received that settlement services providers were more used to clients with historic trauma, such as those who might come through UNHCR resettlement programs and were not suitably prepared to meet the needs of people with recent, unprocessed trauma from an ongoing conflict.

In summary, the lack of a fit-for-purpose emergency humanitarian program, the lack of communication and the current fragmented approach to visa pathways has exacerbated the stress and anxiety experienced by our Ukrainian displaced persons and community members during an already painful time.

3.2 Recommendations

- 1. Engage immediately and effectively with representative community organisations of affected cohorts to ensure community “buy in” and support.
- 2. Establish clear communication protocols with community organisations and issue frequent communication **in conjunction** with community organisations to inform affected cohorts and reduce misinformation and potential exploitation.
- 3. Conduct a retrospective study with community engagement for the period February 2022 to October 2022 to identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement.
- 4. Plan a new process for dealing with resettlement crises, including community support networks on a state-by-state basis.

4 How can Australia best support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants to make strong contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity?

4.1 Observations

Since 24 February 2022 the Department of Home Affairs has granted over 11,500 visas to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine and thousands more to Ukrainian nationals elsewhere. Nearly 11,400 Ukraine national visa holders have since arrived in Australia. It is not currently clear how many Ukrainian nationals are still onshore, as some have returned to Ukraine.

Surveys conducted by the Ukrainian Council of NSW in November 2023 (available [here](#)), and Ukrainian community members at the request of the AFUO in May 2024 (see supplementary submission), provided similar findings on this cohort, namely:

- Cohort is highly educated, with ~34% holding a Bachelor's Degree and ~46% holding a Master’s Degree.
- **60-70%** have found employment, however only ~50% of those are working in a job related to their qualification.
- Cohort is highly experienced in Top 20 Occupations in Demand (as per [report](#) from Minister for Skills and Training).

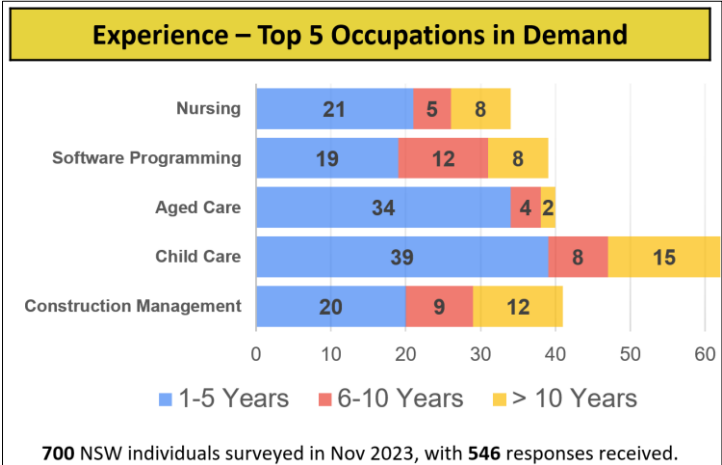
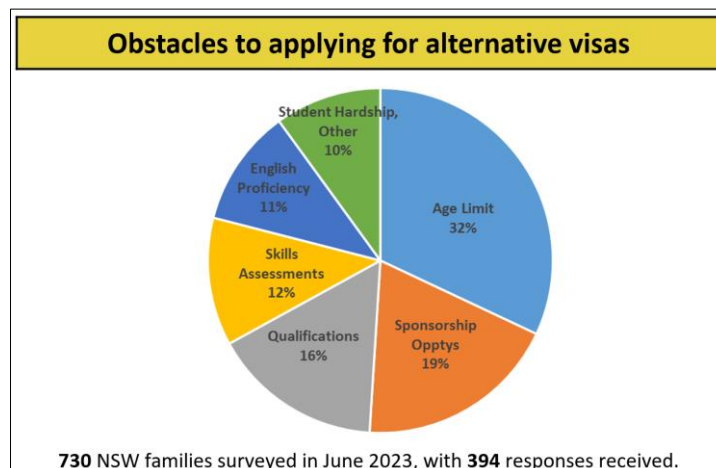


Figure 1 Experience - Top 5 Occupations in Demand

The surveys clearly show that this is a cohort of motivated, industrious and educated people with the skills that Australia needs, and if granted permanent residency would make immediate and strong contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity.

Unfortunately, those displaced Ukrainians who seek permanent residency are being recommended only standard visa pathways, including skilled and student visa programs. These visa pathways are **unsuitable** for the majority of displaced Ukrainians, due mainly to being

ineligible due to age, not receiving a Skillselect invitation to apply, costs of sponsorship for employers and obtaining recognition of their qualifications.



**Figure 2** Obstacles to applying for alternative visas

These challenges with applying for alternative visa pathways have given rise to various psychological challenges, including uncertainty, fear, depression, anxiety, insomnia and feelings of despair, as well as hindering the process of adaptation and multicultural integration.

It is clear that granting permanent residency to displaced Ukrainians would provide support, stability and confidence in their future, support the economic aspirations of humanitarian entrants, and make strong contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

1. Extend the subclass 786 Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas for displaced Ukrainians for a further 3 years to remove immediate stress
2. Develop dedicated pathways for permanent residency for displaced Ukrainians, in consideration of the barriers that many of the Ukrainian cohort face
3. Expand access to other humanitarian programs for Ukrainians
4. Expand relative sponsorship criteria for family visas in humanitarian cases (e.g. siblings, cousins etc)
5. Provide accelerated family reunification pathways for split families

#### 5 Conclusion

The Ukrainian Australian community is extremely grateful for the significant resourcing and funding by the Government and the Department of Home Affairs in aid of the resettlement of Ukrainians seeking safe refuge in Australia following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Our community is also proud of the integration of displaced Ukrainians in Australia, made simpler by Ukraine and Australia sharing common values of freedom, dignity and equality.

It is our belief that the implementation of the recommendations in this submission will lead to better outcomes for cohorts affected by future resettlement crises, reduce psychological stress on displaced Ukrainians in Australia and provide significant long term economic benefits to Australia.

Yours sincerely,

**Stefan Romaniw OAM**  
AFUO Co-Chair

**Kateryna Argyrou**  
AFUO Co-Chair

## Supplementary submission, prepared by displaced Ukrainians

We, displaced Ukrainians in Australia, thank the Department for considering this submission. Having reviewed the Discussion Paper for Australia’s Humanitarian Program 2024-2025, we noticed that it doesn’t at all mention Ukrainian displaced persons who resettled in Australia since February 2022 due to the ongoing brutal invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Our submission, which has been compiled by displaced Ukrainians, suggests some measures that could be taken within the framework of Australia’s Humanitarian Program regarding displaced Ukrainians seeking safe refuge in Australia.

When Russia extended its military action in Ukraine to a full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, many Ukrainians were stranded around the world, including in Australia, and millions more began to feel the hatred of Russia in the form of rockets, bombs and bullets destroying homes, hospitals, schools, and everything that makes a place habitable. Writing this now reads as a tired cliché, but many Ukrainians now in Australia spent weeks or months under occupation, with a lack of food and clean water, the threat of torture, rape or execution, and quite simply either have nowhere to go back to, or cannot bear the thought of the memories held within the walls of their former homes. The cruel irony is that Australia currently has no humanitarian program for Ukrainians who have endured all of this for longer than weeks or months.

After the end of the Offer of Temporary Humanitarian Stay, which was opened shortly after the invasion when it was unclear what the future held for Ukraine, Ukrainians who could not manage to obtain work, family, partner or study visas only had the option of applying for either a [Protection Visa or Bridging Visa E](#). These are the only "Humanitarian" options for Ukrainians - bridging visas. For Ukrainians on subclass 786 visas, the visas will expire in a year, and there has been no news from the Department of Home Affairs about what happens next. As a result, people are panicking that they will be deported back to the horrors they saw.

Ukrainians that have arrived in Australia are largely educated, employed, and determined to be self-sufficient. Our wish would be for fair treatment, a fair Aussie go. The war in Ukraine is no less a humanitarian crisis than any other in the world, and we believe that we have demonstrated to be sound economic contributors, community participants, and good neighbours in a socially cohesive society. We request that we be considered as part of Australia's Humanitarian Program for 2024-25, with ideally an extension to the subclass 786 visas in the short term, and then pathways to permanency - such as a subclass 851 Resolution of Status visa, or simplified pathways which are considerate of the typical barriers displaced Ukrainians have faced. For genuine humanitarian entrants, it would help to create ways to harmonise the many pathways Ukrainians find themselves on as the war in Ukraine continues indefinitely. Permanency would end the psychological pain that uncertainty brings, which compounds the trauma already faced; stability would be a salve.

### Contents:

1. Current arrangements in place for displaced Ukrainians in Australia. Number of displaced Ukrainians in Australia on subclass 786 visas and alternate "humanitarian" pathways; non-transparent statistics on visas granted to Ukrainians since 2022, which does not clarify numbers on different visa subclasses or the number of those remaining onshore or departed.
2. UNHCR reports on the difficulties that Ukrainians are facing in the recent months. Intensifying Russian attacks targeting Ukraine’s civilians and civilian infrastructure, causing more people to flee the frontline regions.
3. Analysis of the cohort’s composition according to statistical data. The visa challenges that displaced Ukrainians face in Australia. Individual cases and media coverage of the issue. Challenges to transferring to other visa subclasses with real cases. Examples of other countries which have extended their humanitarian programs for Ukrainians to include dedicated PR pathways.



4. Benefits of including Ukrainians into Australia’s Humanitarian Program and providing a dedicated Pathway to Permanency for displaced Ukrainians seeking safe refuge in Australia.

#### Part 1

**Current arrangements in place for displaced Ukrainians in Australia. Number of displaced Ukrainians in Australia on 786 and alternate "humanitarian" pathways, bridging visas; non-transparent statistics on visas granted to Ukrainians since 2022, which does not clarify numbers on different visa subclasses or the number of those remaining onshore or departed.**

Ukrainians in Australia and elsewhere are endlessly grateful for the generous support that Australia has provided to them as part of the overall [support to Ukraine, amounting to over \\$1bn](#).

The displaced Ukrainians in Australia, apparently, are not included in the humanitarian program. There is an ambiguity in the public understanding of the number of people who received temporary humanitarian support from Australia. For example, [this article](#) misleadingly reports 11,500 Ukrainians on 786 subclass visas, while the total number of 786 visas issued was in fact just about 4,800. Such misleading information creates negative comparisons with other cohorts of people in need of humanitarian support. [According to the Department of Home Affairs](#), more than [11,000 of Ukrainians arrived in Australia](#) on different, mostly temporary tourist, family-stream, skilled stream visas since February 24, 2022. The current arrangements in place are outlined further.

The offer of a Temporary Humanitarian Stay [expired](#) on July 31, 2022. “The Australian Government acknowledges that there will be some Ukrainian nationals who were unable to accept the offer of a temporary humanitarian stay, which ended on 31 July 2022.

Ukrainians and their families who are in Australia and wish to extend their stay can also access standard visa pathways, including the skilled, family, student and visitor visa programs. The department encourages Ukrainian nationals who want to come to Australia or extend their stay “to explore their visa options.” Unfortunately, these options are not suitable for the majority of displaced Ukrainians who found their refuge in Australia.

The Offer was active for just a bit over three months, but the war is already deep into its third year. Not all people were able to escape from the occupied territories in time to arrive onshore in Australia and accept the offer of a Temporary Humanitarian Stay. The exact number of Ukrainians who applied for the 866 visa is unknown. According to the data from this [Home Affairs document](#), there were just 617 applications for 866 visas from Ukraine nationals in 2021-2023.

#### Part 2

**UNHCR reports on the difficulties that Ukrainians are facing in the recent months. Intensifying Russian attacks targeting Ukraine’s civilians and civilian infrastructure, causing more people to flee the frontline regions. There are no safe places left in Ukraine with hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties**

There are less than 4,000 people remaining in Australia on 786 visas. An undisclosed small number of people are on bridging visas. Thus, there are a few thousand displaced Ukrainians sheltering from war in Australia, while the total number of Ukrainian refugees outside Ukraine amounts to 6.5 million people, according to [UN data](#).

The Australian Government understandably has financial concerns and limitations with regards to the Humanitarian Program. There are millions of people in need of humanitarian aid globally. However, speaking of the cohort of displaced Ukrainians in Australia, it is less a question of financing, but more

a question of political will. 60% of the people on 786 visas in NSW were employed and fully funding themselves without government support, according to the survey conducted by UCNSW in [November 2023](#). People on bridging visas are ineligible for Centrelink support. Thus, as of now, roughly 1000 people might be receiving financial support from the Australian Government. The other several thousand are actively contributing to the economy by working and paying taxes.

The most recent AFUO-approved poll conducted by Ukrainian community members demonstrated 72% of Ukrainians on 786 and bridging visas are employed, 10% don't work and don't receive financial assistance from the government, 18% aren't employed and rely on financial assistance.

Displaced Ukrainians in Australia are facing enormous pressure and stress every day for the third year now. The barriers and challenges keep adding up, with the situation in Ukraine and Ukrainian legislation changing almost on a weekly basis.

For instance, the Ukrainian Government recently made it practically impossible for some people to even get the documents necessary for migration purposes or other vital issues, [reports SBS](#):

*"Ukraine has restricted consular services for men of fighting age in a renewed bid to boost its military might — a move that has angered and worried some Ukrainians in Australia.*

*A decision, made on 23 April, meant male citizens aged 18 to 60 who live abroad could not apply for consular assistance, according to the Embassy of Ukraine in Australia and New Zealand".*

This means they are not able to access essential services, including passport renewals, police clearances for migration, etc.

For millions of people from the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, there is literally no way back, as their homes were ruined and their home regions have been:

Bombed:

ABC: [Satellite images show scale of destruction in the Ukrainian industrial city of Sievierodonetsk](#)

Flooded:

ABC: [Nova Kakhovka dam in Ukraine's Kherson region destroyed, settlements being evacuated](#)

Contaminated with explosive particles:

Suspilne (Ukrainian media outlet): [In Ukraine, 30% of the territory is mined, and demining will take tens of years - the Emergency Department of Emergency Situations](#)

And this tendency only gets worse day by day.

On June 3, 2024 ABC released [an article](#) about the most recent developments in the Kharkiv region. Apparently, Russia's plan is to make the city uninhabitable, just like it did with hundreds of settlements on the occupied territories of Ukraine:

*"It's doubtful he has plans to invade the city [Kharkiv] or order a full-frontal attack on it — he lacks the requisite force at this point.*

*"But making the residents' lives there as miserable as possible, causing a massive outflow and evacuation of the city is part of his plan to make Ukraine unviable, economically."*



The UN continuously urges for humanitarian support for Ukraine and Ukrainians:

*“Missile and rocket attacks have caused widespread death, destruction of homes and businesses and severely damaged energy infrastructures across Ukraine. The energy crisis is disrupting public access to water, electricity, heating, healthcare, education and social protection. Many Ukrainians are living in damaged homes or in buildings ill-prepared for life-threatening freezing temperatures. **As the war continues, humanitarian needs are multiplying and spreading. An [estimated 14.6 million people in Ukraine will need humanitarian assistance in 2024.](#)”***

The recent United Nations High Commissioner’s reports are showing disturbing trends of intensified Russian attacks on Ukrainian critical civilian infrastructure:

#### **Ukraine: Displaced civilians describe terrifying Russian attacks in north-eastern border areas**

*“There has been massive destruction of people’s homes and other civilian infrastructure. Entire communities have been uprooted and destroyed, with more than 10,000 people displaced to date.*

*According to [HRMMU](#), at least 35 civilians have been killed and 137 injured in the Kharkiv region since Russian armed forces launched their cross-border offensive on 10 May. Of those killed or injured in the northern part of the region, which has seen the heaviest fighting, more than half were over the age of 60”*

#### **Ukraine: Concern at the plight of civilians and intensified Russian attacks**

*“Our human rights monitoring team in Ukraine, which is continuing to analyse information from the ground, has verified that at least eight civilians have been killed and 35 injured in the Kharkiv region since last Friday.*

*This follows a pattern of civilian casualties documented for April, when [at least 129 civilians were killed and 574 injured](#), the majority amid attacks by Russian armed forces along the frontlines.”*

There are no signs of Russia willing to slow down or end the hostilities in any manner. On the contrary, the extent of the aggression is getting larger and larger day by day. The biggest attacks on civilian infrastructure occurred within the past 6 months. Below are links to the information about the scale of these brutal unjustified attacks, exclusively targeting civilians.

ACLED (The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project):

*“[ACLED records](#) corresponding increases in Russia’s targeting of civilians in Ukraine during air raids — the number of events rose by 11% in January, 50% in February, and a further 19% in March (...). **In the first three weeks of April, Russian airstrikes killed at least 65 civilians across Ukraine, more than twice the monthly average of the preceding 12 months.**”*

United Nations:

*“(…) [over 700 civilian casualties](#) [were recorded] across Ukraine in April, including 129 deaths, a significant increase from March. Since 22 March, there have been five waves of attacks on the country’s energy infrastructure, particularly in Kharkiv and Dnipro regions, causing rolling power outages and affecting millions nationwide. Moreover, attacks on ports are threatening their ability to export grain at a time of rising food insecurity.”*

Wikipedia [article on the Dec 29, 2023](#) largest missile attack:

*“In the early morning hours of 29 December 2023, Russia launched what was seen to be the largest wave of missiles and drones yet seen in the Russo-Ukrainian War, with hundreds of missiles and*

*drones hitting the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and other cities across the country. **At least 58 people were reported to have been killed in the attacks, while 160 others were injured.***”

Wikipedia [article on the March 22, 2024](#) biggest attack on energy infrastructure, hitting a HPP: *“In the morning hours of 22 March 2024, Russia carried out one of the largest missile and drone attacks against Ukraine in the series of similar Russian attacks during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War with 88 missiles and 63 drones. **The Dnieper Hydroelectric Station was put out of action. The attacks left over a million people without electricity.**”*

BBC: [Russian attack on Kharkiv](#) superstore kills 12, injures 43: *“**At least 12 people have been killed and 43 others wounded after Russian forces hit a supermarket in the northern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv with two glide bombs, local officials say.**”*

BBC: “You won’t have kidneys” – How [Russians kidnap and torture civilians](#) in Kherson  
The father of a Ukrainian refugee who has a 786 visa – Vlad Guz, was tortured in Kherson when it was occupied by Russians. Oleksandr Guz is a civilian hostage, Russian soldiers kidnapped him twice and tortured him, smashing his face, and breaking his ribs and arms. They undress him and hang him to make him choke, trying to make him collaborate with the Russian occupants.

Australia’s [2024-2025 Humanitarian Program Discussion Paper](#) mentions the following:

“To ensure Australia continues to play its part, the Government will work closely with both the international and domestic community, particularly the UNHCR, as we deliver Australia’s humanitarian intake. Consistent with the approach adopted by the UNHCR, Australia will prioritise those cohorts who have the greatest resettlement need. This will focus on people who are outside their home country and are:

- assessed as refugees by the UNHCR and referred to Australia for resettlement;
- applicants proposed by a close family member in Australia; and
- vulnerable cohorts within refugee populations, including women and children, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ+ and other identified minority groups with family links in Australia.”

The war goes on, the people keep fleeing their homes and there is no way back for them. Their houses are destroyed by Russians, their lives are shattered by the war. Russia is openly targeting civilians in its brutal daily air attacks, killing Ukrainians every day.

**Australia consults UNHCR, and UNHCR data confirms that the threat for civilians in Ukraine is growing.** [UNHCR’s latest report](#) on the situation in Ukraine is truly alarming:

*“More than two years since Russia’s full-scale invasion, regular shelling and attacks continue to claim lives and destroy homes and critical infrastructure across the country. Most recently, last week on 19 May, an air attack targeted a recreation area in Cherkaska Lozova village in Kharkiv region, killing six people and injuring at least 27. In the past week, more than 10,300 people were evacuated from their villages in Kharkiv region’s border areas.”*

*“At the same time, more people continue to flee on their own from frontline communities in Donetsk, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions towards central and western regions. Here, the authorities leading the response are requesting support to help with the reception of and assistance to the internally displaced people.”*

There is a pressing need for humanitarian aid for Ukrainians, which is increasing exponentially with the number of brutal Russian attacks targeting civilians. The worsening situation in Ukraine also causes even more distress for the cohort of displaced Ukrainians in Australia, who are facing a scary and uncertain future.

We would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the Australian Government for the [latest \\$31 million humanitarian support package](#) for Ukraine and its energy infrastructure, suffering from relentless Russian attacks.

Speaking of the displaced Ukrainians onshore, the budget for a dedicated PR pathway could have been much smaller than that, but it could save lives, while at the same time benefit the Australian multicultural society and contribute to it.

Part 3

**Analysis of the cohort’s composition according to statistical data. The visa challenges that displaced Ukrainians face in Australia. Individual cases and media coverage of the issue. Reasons of being unable to move to another visa subclasses with real cases. Examples of other countries extending their humanitarian programs for Ukrainians to include dedicated PR pathways.**

Last year ABC [wrote](#) that “**The Government will work closely with the Ukrainian community to ensure permanent visa options are made available to this cohort at an appropriate time**”.

The Department of Home Affairs [said](#) that since the end of February 2022, it has granted more than 11,500 mostly temporary, non-humanitarian visas to Ukrainians.

The exact statistics have not been disclosed by the Department, but according to various unofficial sources, around 4,800 people were granted 786 visas.

3,790 of 786 visa holders [remain](#) in the country. Some Ukrainians have left due to visa uncertainty.

6 months ago, on November 20, 2023, Andrew Mencinsky and Marta Artemenko on behalf of the Ukrainian Council of NSW had a meeting with the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration. Mr Mencinsky and Ms Artemenko presented [a survey](#) conducted among displaced Ukrainians in NSW. The survey received 546 responses and confirmed that:

- Cohort is older, with ~30% over 46 years of age, with ~38% between 36-45 years of age
- 60% have found employment, however only ~50% of those are working in a job related to their qualification
- Cohort is highly educated, with ~34% holding a Bachelor's Degree and ~46% holding a Master's Degree
- Cohort is highly experienced in Top 20 Occupations in Demand (as per the report from Minister for Skills and Training)

Minister Giles noted the challenges faced by displaced Ukrainians in Australia and confirmed that the Albanese government is working on a specialised visa program that addresses these challenges and will provide pathways to permanent residency for those who wish to seek it.

While no firm timetable was given for this specialised program, Minister Giles committed to continuing direct engagement with the Ukrainian Council of NSW and the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations to ensure that any solution is supported by the Ukrainian community.

The presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Despite all the effort, media coverage, email campaigns to MPs on state and federal levels, there have been no updates or announcements from the Ministry of Immigration regarding the further strategy on providing a dedicated pathway to PR to those Ukrainians who have nowhere to return to in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, several countries have provided such pathways already:

[New Zealand](#) (1,510 displaced Ukrainians)

[Canada](#) (over 185,000 displaced Ukrainians)

[Luxembourg](#) (country’s population 600,000 people, 4,200 displaced Ukrainians)

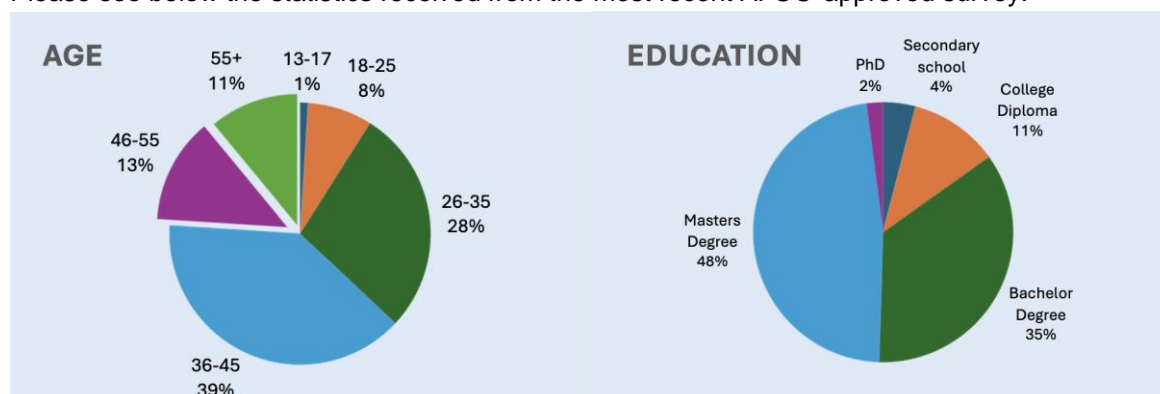
Since 2022, displaced Ukrainians in Australia put in colossal efforts to integrate into society and make a positive contribution to the country that provided them with such a warm welcome during this horrible time of war and devastation.

Most of the displaced people are women with children, and, according to research conducted in June 2024 with the approval of AFUO, 72% of them are working, not relying on financial support from the state. There is just a small number of people on 786 visas who are receiving Centrelink payments. UCNSW’s official survey from November 2023 demonstrated that 60% of the surveyed 786 holders were working, thus not relying on the financial support from the state.

This June, with the approval of AFUO, a group of Ukrainian community members and activists conducted a survey among Ukrainians on humanitarian and EBV visas to get the most recent data. It demonstrated comparatively the same statistics as the one conducted in November 2023 by UCNSW with a 10% fluctuation. For example, the November 2023 survey demonstrated 60% employment, while the June 2024 survey demonstrated 72% employment. Age was called the biggest challenge in transferring to other visas by 32% and 23% respectively.

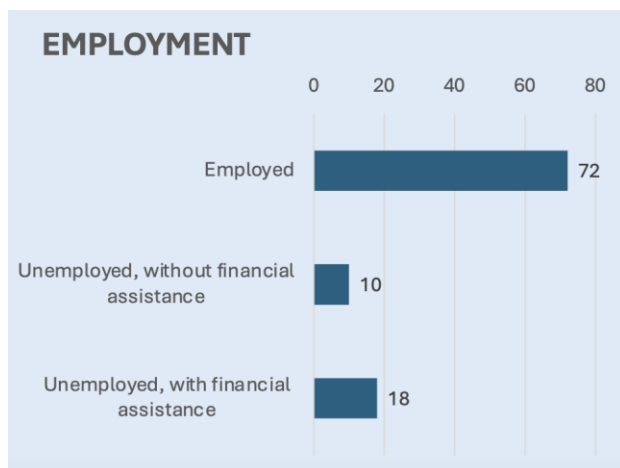
The presentation containing official data from UCNSW’s November 2023 survey can be found [here](#).

Please see below the statistics received from the most recent AFUO-approved survey.



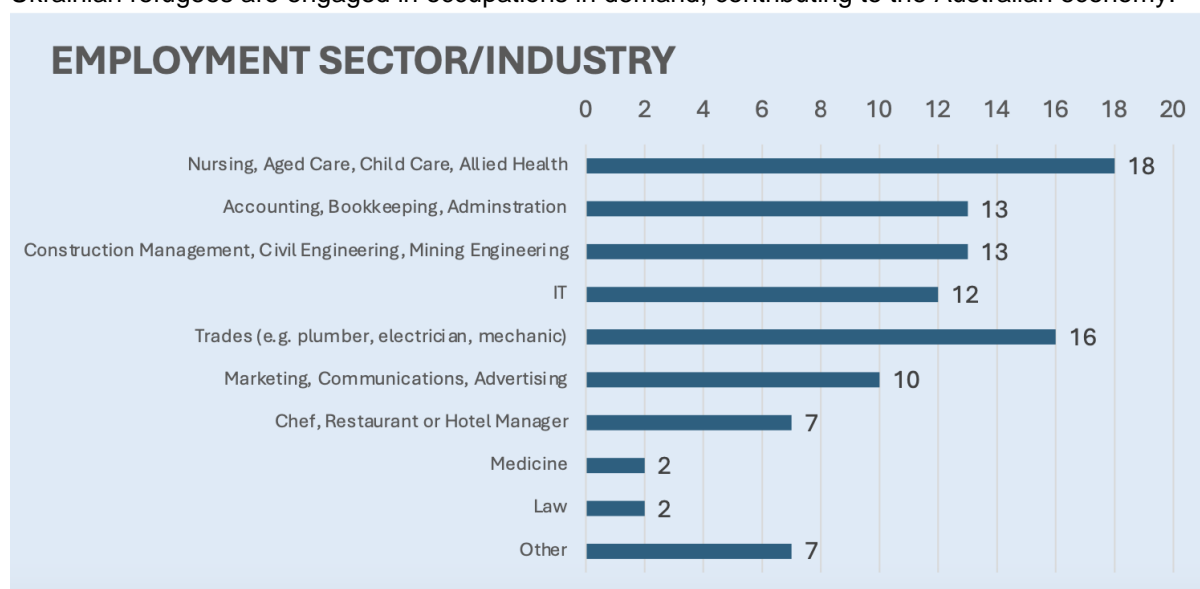
Cohort is older with 24% of people older than the maximum age limit for most visa pathways (except for a few programs in remote areas). Despite 48% of the survey participants claiming to have a Master’s degree, the age limit remains a huge challenge.

June 2024 research shows that 83% hold a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree: 48% have Master’s degree, 35% have a Bachelor’s degree, 11% have a college diploma, and 2% are PhDs. This, together with the employment statistics, demonstrates that displaced Ukrainians can provide a valuable contribution to the Australian workforce with their education, knowledge and experience in in-demand areas.



The above is further proven with the survey results demonstrating 72% of displaced Ukrainians already working in Australia. 10% don't rely on financial assistance from the government despite being unemployed, and only 18% don't work and receive financial support.

Ukrainian refugees are engaged in occupations in demand, contributing to the Australian economy:



**Among the biggest challenges displaced Ukrainians face in transferring to other visa subclasses are:**

- Age – 23%
- English proficiency – 22%
- Employer refuses to sponsor – 14%
- Occupation not in demand – 13%
- Skills assessment requirements – 11%
- Lack of funds to apply for a visa – 9%
- Level of education – only 2%
- Medical assessment – 1% (some respondents have tumours, epilepsy or other serious medical conditions)
- Other – 5% (e.g. prepared all documents and submitted an EOI, but was not invited to apply to independent or state-sponsored skilled visas as migration quotes were decreased).

While some people are able to move to alternative visas, this is a cohort that wasn't planning immigration for years, these people were forced to leave their own country due to unprovoked and unjustified full-scale Russian aggression. However, Australia was neither a random nor economically

calculated choice. Each case is unique, but each contains a personal tie to Australia, be it a kind friend who offered a helping hand, a partner, an extended family member, or a former employer/business partner.

People are facing various challenges moving to other visa subclasses, and this causes enormous pressure and uncertainty in an already traumatic and stressful situation.

STARTTS, a non-profit organisation established in 1988 to assist refugee survivors of torture and trauma rebuild their lives in Australia, in their Submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee’s Inquiry on Australian support for Ukraine, provides a detailed report on the mental health challenges that displaced Ukrainians are facing. In their report, they dedicate a lot of attention to the distress caused by visa uncertainty. [Submission #133](#).

In our submission, we put more focus on the visa challenges that many displaced Ukrainians are facing in Australia. We believe that they require a dedicated pathway to PR that can suit all of them regardless of their age, occupation and family situation. In 2023, the Australian Government provided [such a pathway](#) to around [20,000 Subclass 785 Temporary Protection visa \(TPV\) and Subclass 790 Safe Haven Enterprise visa \(SHEV\) holders](#):

As of now, the Department of Home Affairs encourages eligible Ukrainians to seek alternative visa pathways if they wish to extend their stay in Australia.

Ukrainians who have nowhere to return to in Ukraine spent thousands of dollars seeking legal advice on the visa pathways available for them. Most of these people were told they weren’t eligible for any kind of visa, primarily due to the constraints outlined in the recent June 2024 research above. Age is one of the main factors, yet not the only one. The recently introduced Migration Strategy has a key aim of reducing the migration numbers as much as possible:

The Hon Clare O’Neil MP, Minister for Home Affairs

“Since September, the Government’s actions have led to substantial declines in migration levels, with recent international student visa grants down by 35% on the previous year.

“The actions this weekend [will continue to drive migration levels down](#) while delivering on our commitments in the Migration Strategy to fix the broken system we inherited”, March 21, 2024.

Thus, apart from family stream visas, the current approach to reducing migration numbers creates almost unsurpassable barriers for Ukrainians who are in an already stressful and difficult situation. Let us emphasise once again that those few thousand Ukrainians who fled the war in Ukraine and came to Australia had ties to this country in one form or another. For some, it was the only place in the world where they could go. Now that they can’t go back to Ukraine and struggle to get any kind of certainty in Australia, every day is a struggle for them.

These Ukrainians with humanitarian and EBV visas, their relatives and Australian friends sent a massive email campaign to all federal MPs to remind them about the visas’ expiry and other difficulties related to this issue. Many of them responded that they would provide their support and forward this inquiry to the DoHA and the Minister of Immigration.

Some of the stories about the challenges Ukrainians face have been featured on the media, for instance:



*"Our Kharkiv is constantly being bombed. My office was destroyed. There is absolutely no hope to go back there safely with kids," Alyona said.*

*[She said to SBS that at nearly 45 years old](#) she was worried she wouldn't be able to transfer to a working visa."*

*Marta Artamenko and her daughter Khrystyna are among those who face an uncertain future. The pair fled their home city of Kyiv in February 2022 when the Ukrainian capital was attacked by Russian forces. Weeks later, they arrived in Sydney where they were granted temporary humanitarian visas.*

*"When I arrived in Australia I understood this is my new life ... [I have to] think about how to build it from scratch for myself and for my daughter," [Marta, 41, told the ABC.](#)*

*For 17-year-old Khrystyna, it was also daunting starting afresh. "It's a different culture here, different traditions ... settling in was a very hard process," she said. Her and her mother's temporary humanitarian visas are due to expire next year.*

*"People are trying to settle down but when you don't know what your tomorrow is going to look like this is not possible," Khrystyna said.*

Among the most common factors preventing displaced Ukrainians from individually transferring to other visa subclasses are the following, proven by unpublished stories of displaced Ukrainians:

**Tamara Plastovets, Perth, WA: No visas available to sponsor grandparents in such age. Invited by her granddaughter. [Her story on PerthNow.](#)**

Tamara Plastovets, [a 91-year-old refugee](#) from Donetsk, Ukraine, is facing an uncertain future in Australia due to the impending expiration of her humanitarian visa in 2025. Tamara's life story is one marked by tragedy and displacement. She fled her homeland in search of safety and refuge, leaving behind a war-torn country. With no family or support system left in Ukraine, Tamara has found solace in Australia, where her only surviving daughter resides, as her son was killed in the war in Afghanistan in 1984.

Despite her advanced age and vulnerable circumstances, no alternative visa pathways are available to her, there are no visa pathways for grandparents. This leaves her in a state of profound uncertainty and vulnerability, with nowhere else to turn.

I urge you to consider Tamara's case with the utmost compassion and humanity. She is a frail elderly woman who has endured unimaginable hardships in her lifetime. Please provide her (and other Ukrainian refugees) with any form of support that will allow her to remain in Australia, where she can live out her remaining years in safety and dignity, surrounded by the love and care of her daughter, granddaughters and great-granddaughters – Marina Yukhymets, Tamara's granddaughter said.

**Anna Winter (name changed), St James, WA: Her age and the medical condition of her son are objectives to access standard immigration pathways**

My son and I came to Australia right after the beginning of the full-scale invasion. We haven't had any close relatives here or friends, only distant acquaintances who helped us, so applied for a visa when Australia announced its humanitarian program.

I am a doctor (ICU and anaesthetist) and am in the process of having my overseas qualification recognised (it's quite a long and expensive process for doctors). In the meantime, I have decided to

work two jobs to live a good life in this wonderful country: I work in aged care and hospitals as well as a casual employee.

In addition, I have finished a diploma as an assistant in nursing and am finishing another diploma in anaesthetic technology soon. I believe local qualifications might help me resume my career as an anaesthetist faster.

My 18-year-old son is finishing school soon and is a person with special needs; he has epilepsy. Australia is a better place for him to be now than Ukraine.

Unfortunately, I don't see any future in this country. I'm 46, and there's no pathway for permanent residency for people of my age. Due to the uncertainty and the huge amount of stress I have developed diabetes and asked to change my name for this submission.

I urge the Australian government to provide a dedicated pathway for all Ukrainians in Australia to reduce the level of our stress and let us focus on contributing to Australian society with our skills and experience.

**Oleksandr Bahas, Applecross, WA: Requires further education and time to get work experience to be able to access standard visa options. [His story on ABC.](#)**

I came to Australia when I was 17. A friend of my family told us that their good friend from Latvia had a spare room in her house and was happy to host someone from Ukraine. That's how I ended up living in Ardross, Western Australia. In addition, my own sister moved to Australia many years ago and has become a citizen already.

Unfortunately, I don't have a pathway to permanent residency (PR) in this country as I've recently finished school. I work at IKEA and am considering options for my further education. I'm grateful that Australia subsidises TAFE courses for Ukrainian refugees, enabling us to study with local fees.

I have completed a Certificate in Tourism at TAFE. I would really like to continue my studies but cannot afford it due to the very high tuition fees for international students at the university. Now I am forced to work without the opportunity to study because I need to provide for myself.

I appreciate this humanitarian program in Australia, but my life would be less stressful if I didn't have to worry about my visa status and could stay here. I've made many friends, fall in love for the first time, had my heart broken later then, got my driver's license, and bought my very first car here. Australia already feels like home, and I'd like to ask the government to support all Ukrainians in Australia with a special visa program.

**Vasyl Petlinskyi, Maylands, Western Australia: lack of funds for a parent visa**

I work as a Motor Mechanic, and my occupation is on the Skilled Occupation List, but I am 50 years old, and I cannot apply for PR at this age. In addition, my daughter, her husband and my grandkids are Australian citizens, we spend a lot of time together, but my daughter doesn't have enough money to sponsor me and my wife for a parent visa. I am learning English, working and paying taxes and I would like to ask for your support in the creation of a special program for people like me.

**Liza Marian, Paddington, New South Wales: very high points in EoI for State sponsored visa, but has not been invited for a year as DoHA reduced quotas for immigration. Invited by a friend from Australia. [Her interview for ABC.](#)**

I am an interpreter and have been working in my professional field in Australia since June 2022 (I received my 786 visa with the right to work in June 2022 as well). My occupation (272412 Interpreter) is only on the list for State Nominated Visas. I submitted an EOI for a 190 visa on 01.09.23.

This year the application process is very competitive, and the DoHA’s policy on reducing immigration quotas doesn’t make it easier. On top of that, this year NSW is inviting occupations within the target sectors only (my occupation is outside these target sectors). Thus, even though I have superior English (IELTS band 9), high points (90), and 18 months of local work experience, it is highly unlikely I ever receive an invitation from NSW.

I have nowhere to return to in Ukraine, so I am just trying to do all I can to survive. The uncertainty of my situation is unbearable. A year ago, I went on Q+A with the same question - [what do Ukrainians like me have to do when they have nowhere else to go in the world](#)? After that show, the Government announced a [pathway to PR for 20,000 displaced people](#) in Australia, but not Ukrainians.

Ukrainians in Australia are grateful to the DoHA for all the support and for the opportunity to apply for other visas from 786. However, many people like me can’t do this for one reason or another. There are just a couple thousand people in this situation in the country. A pathway to PR for them could be life-saving.

**Vlad Guz and Oleksandr Soloviov, Pyrmont, NSW: Skills assessment requirements do not meet market demands – e.g. there are cases when people employed at Tier 1 companies, but cannot get the skills assessment. Vlad has been invited by his friend from Australia.**

My partner and I work for occupations in demand, e.g. I’m a Marketing Coordinator in a Construction Engineering company, and Oleksandr is employed at ANZ Bank as a Software Engineer (Cybersecurity). We both have great skills and Australian companies consider us suitable for the job, but we are still not eligible for a positive skills assessment yet. E.g. even though Oleksandr has a master’s degree, it’s not highly relevant to his occupation. In addition, his 5-year education in a private IT college hasn’t been recognised, so he has to have 6 years of experience and PRL to get an overseas qualification recognition from ACS. This is a lot, given that he is already employed at a Tier 1 Australian company, and they pay him an extremely high salary compared to the Australian median.

Even if we get the skills assessment, it takes a lot of time to complete, and then you have to apply for the Expression of interest for a skilled visa and be invited, which is difficult if you don’t have many points.

We haven’t prepared for migration, and collecting work evidence for 6 years to get the skills assessment done is challenging, given that we cannot even access consular services anymore. We ask you to consider our high-income employment as evidence of our skills and contribution to Australian society and urge Australia to create a dedicated pathway for permanent residency for Ukrainians on humanitarian visas.

Even though both of us can apply for a temporary work visa, it’s stressful to live with the fear of being made redundant or fired. If it happens, he will have 6 months only to find a new job and receive an offer of employment. Nowadays, the economy is very competitive, and the job market is volatile, even for Engineers and Marketers. Many companies had mass layoffs last year and it’s still happening on the market.

We don’t have anything left in Ukraine. We have settled in Australia, got great jobs, bought a brand-new car, and pay a lot of taxes. We plea for certainty about our future in a country we have already started a new life in.

**Iryna Zaiets, Chatswood, NSW: Challenges learning English to pass an English exam at a high score for immigration, having a small child and full-time work as a scientist. Her [story on SBS](#)**

We fled Ukraine with our newborn child due to the Russian full-scale invasion, fearing for her safety. My sister invited us to stay with her as she is an Australian resident. My husband and I are scientists with extensive experience in the pharmaceutical industry, specialising in R&D and Production. As highly qualified migrants, we resumed our careers in Sydney, working in the R&D department of a biotechnological company. We are grateful to Australia for granting us the opportunity to stay on a 786 visa for three years, allowing us to work, pay taxes, and raise our now two-year-old daughter in a secure environment.

However, the uncertainty about our future in Australia is causing significant stress and anxiety. When we arrived, our focus was on establishing a stable life for our family, leaving little time to prepare for migration requirements and English proficiency tests.

While some may suggest applying for a Permanent Skilled Visa, we were not prepared for migration before the war in our country. Our English proficiency may not be competent or superior enough to earn sufficient points for a skilled visa, and our age does not contribute many points either.

We ask the Australian government to empathise with our situation and that of hundreds of families like ours. We urge for the creation of a dedicated pathway for all Ukrainians on humanitarian and Bridging visas. Less than 4,000 Ukrainians with humanitarian visas are currently in Australia, contributing to the country's well-being and striving to build a brighter future in a safer place.

**Taisiia Medvedieva | Dee Why, New South Wales**

**Has an extremely important occupation, brought 2 young children to Australia and works in occupations in demand, but cannot access standard PR pathways due to the age**

I came to Australia to my brother (who has already become an Australian citizen) with 2 young children, 5 and 8 y.o., they absolutely love Australia. In Ukraine, I worked as a doctor, and neonatologist, for 10 years, but I’m turning 43 this year, and there’s no option for me to stay in this country permanently. Moreover, my occupation isn’t listed in the SOL.

Currently, I am working on my qualifications and experience recognition to continue my neonatologist career in Australia. In the meantime, I am employed as a Support Worker in an Aged Care facility – this area has a huge skills shortage at the moment. I am grateful for this opportunity to live in a safe country, and for being able to provide a happy childhood for my children. Last year Emma, my daughter, won a silver medal in the swimming carnival, she plays in a music band and gets medals in Kumon, a maths programme.

Ilya, my son is now going to Kindy. Ilya and Emma even had a chance to star in a movie called “Dreams Come True.” I am delighted they have these opportunities, and I just ask the Government to create a dedicated pathway for us to stay here permanently.

**Zoryana and Andrii Krykunenko, Lane Cove NSW: sold everything they had left in Ukraine and started over here in Australia, establishing a successful business and reuniting with their relatives from Sydney. [A story about their business success on SBS.](#)**

We were forced to flee the war from Kyiv as at 4:30 AM, we were awakened by the sounds of explosions. In panic and haste, we left everything we had and, dressed only in our pyjamas, drove out of our country to save our children. Later our relatives, who are Australian citizens,

offered us temporary shelter and the opportunity to start a new life, where we received a 786 visa.

Our two children made new friends, learned English, and integrated into the local school. For them, Ukraine has become a distant memory, and returning would be extremely difficult and stressful.

We have spent a lot of time and effort starting over here in Australia. After obtaining an education and learning English at TAFE, I, Zoryana Krykunenko, work as a dental assistant. My husband, Andriy Krykunenko, after confirming his education at the International Sea School Australia, started and successfully runs his own business, the wake-surfing school “ADRENALIN WAKE CLUB AUSTRALIA” ([www.adrenalinwakeclub.au](http://www.adrenalinwakeclub.au)), which is currently the first and only one in Sydney. We invested everything we had, \$200 000 in the MasterCraft boats to start our business.

In the first five months, the club provided services to more than 100 clients and received over 70 positive reviews on [our Google business page](#). Our clients include people of all ages, including children and the elderly, as well as tourists from different countries. We also provide services to people in wheelchairs, ensuring comfort and accessibility for everyone. We have provided employment for ourselves and a student from the Czech Republic, whom we sponsored to receive the necessary education. Our plans include opening the first children’s wakesurfing school. We want to train champions who will represent Australia in international competitions.

We have integrated into Australian society, pay taxes, and actively contribute to the local economy. Our family has built a new life here, and we hope the Australian government will allow us to stay.

Our family can no longer return to Ukraine, and this reality is very painful for us. Our property was destroyed during the war, and we lost everything we had built over the years. The jobs we had are gone, and we had to start a new life from scratch.

**Yulia and Ivan Levytsky, have left Australia due to visa uncertainty. Yulia’s brother is on partner visa in Australia, his fiancée invited his relatives to come to Australia. [Yulia and Ivan Levytsky story on SBS](#).**

Ivan has been a sailor for more than 10 years, but he had to quit due to visa conditions. The 786 visa has a travel restriction, but as a sailor, you have to be able to leave and re-enter the country many times. His company, where he worked for the last 10 years, normally calls him to work a week before docking in a port. It requires an immediate response to get flight tickets and organise everything.

The Department of Home Affairs (DoHA) gives permission to leave the country in exceptional circumstances and Ivan has applied once for such a permit. After returning back, they decided that it was too stressful for him and his family to coordinate his work with the visa conditions and the DoHA, so they decided to move to Romania, where they have permission to travel, visit their relatives and where Ivan could leave the EU to work as a sailor in his company. In addition, after living there for a quite some time they will be entitled to apply for PR without any age or occupation limitations.

Part 4

**Benefits of including Ukrainians into the 2024-2025 Australia’s Humanitarian Program and providing a dedicated PR pathway for displaced Ukrainians in Australia.**

The government has kindly dedicated significant funding to aid in the resettlement of Ukrainians in 2022, and based on the research conducted and widely discussed in point 3, it is safe to say that the displaced Ukrainians were highly successful in integrating into Australian society.

Providing a dedicated pathway to permanent residency for the displaced Ukrainians into the 2024-2025 Humanitarian Program will NOT require any further significant spending, will not contribute to the housing crisis and will provide benefits to the Australian society in the form of a young, skilled, tax-paying, English-speaking migrant group that is already settled in the country and can be showcased as an example of the Humanitarian Program's successful performance.

Ukraine and Australia share multiple same values - freedom, dignity, equality, and, among everything else, the importance of preserving national cultures, languages and traditions. Australia prides itself as a highly successful multicultural society. Russia, on the other hand, aims at total destruction of even the slightest hints of Ukrainian language or culture. This is one of the aggressor's main objectives. Thus, the importance of preserving the Ukrainian language and culture worldwide becomes crucial. As a multicultural country, Australia would highly benefit from an intake of young Ukrainians who can preserve and share the beauty of Ukrainian culture and language far away from home.

Throughout the two years in Australia, displaced Ukrainians have demonstrated a high level of self-organisation, not over-relying on settlement services' support, but seeking solutions to their challenges independently. With the high employment rates and engagement in volunteer activities, it is safe to say that most of the displaced Ukrainians have already successfully integrated into Australian society, thus showcasing the efficiency and success of Australia's humanitarian and resettlement efforts. Ukrainians demonstrate a very high ability to rely on their own skills and resources, not demanding vast resettlement support from the government.

Ukrainians are active in the community, with just over half of all survey respondents indicating they volunteer or participate in community activities. In particular, multicultural festivals, charity fundraisers and other forms of volunteer work are recognised by the Ukrainian community as a way of contributing to the overall social cohesion of Australian society.

In addition, Ukrainians represent a highly motivated cohort with a high income, with the June 2024 survey demonstrating that 30% of the surveyed working Ukrainians reported above average income, making bigger contributions to the budget by paying more income tax.

21% of all Ukrainians in Australia reported earning \$70 000 - \$135 000; 3% of Ukrainians reported being in the \$135 000 - 160 000 bracket; 4% reported an income of \$160 000 - \$190 000; 2% reported making over \$190 000 p.a.

All of these people made their own accommodation arrangements a long time ago and will not contribute to a housing crisis or compete with Australians in need of housing.

Displaced Ukrainians in Australia actively engage with the media, and their stories find compassion and understanding among Australians. Including Ukrainians into the 2024-2025 Humanitarian Program would definitely be a move welcomed by Australian society.

Multiple campaigns have been held, and calls on the media have been voiced by various organisations to provide some certainty to the Ukrainians in Australia. Some of the stories covered by the media are below.

ABC: [Ukrainian refugees from Russian invasion 'in limbo' without visa support, aid groups warn](#)



KyivPost: [Displaced Ukrainians in Australia Uncertain About Future](#)  
ABC Listen: [Calls for better migration pathways for Ukrainians in Australia](#)  
ABC Listen: [Uncertainty as Ukrainian refugees commemorate war anniversary](#)  
VOA News: [Campaigners Urge Australia to Let Ukrainian Refugees Stay Permanently](#)  
The Northern Daily Leader: [‘Unpredictable’ future for Ukrainian family as ticket to safety runs out](#)  
ABC Triple J: [The Ukrainians left in limbo two years on](#)

Ukrainians in Australia are highly active in all spheres of public life and business, successfully integrating into the vibrant and diverse Australian society:

Urban List: [Kyiv Social is A Sydney Ukrainian Restaurant Supporting Refugees](#)  
NRL: [Australia-based Ukrainians get first taste of rugby league](#)  
The Guardian: [‘A different planet’: displaced by war, Ukrainians prepare for a surreal first Christmas in Australia](#)  
ABC: [Ukrainian refugees away from home for second Christmas as celebrations move to Dec 25](#)  
SBS: [This family from Ukraine was welcomed by Australians and found their new home in former monastery in Molong](#)  
Skynews: [‘My dream’: Ukrainian refugee earns spot at Conservatorium High School](#)  
The Daily Telegraph: [‘I’ve never cried so much in my life’. Tetyana Pyshna was forced to flee Ukraine leaving her husband and parents behind. She has been overwhelmed by the kindness she has received in Sydney.](#)  
SBS: [Andriy Krykunenko on the war of 2022, choices for the sake of children and Adrenalin Wake Club in Sydney](#)  
SBS: [Oksana Horda came from Ukraine to Australia because of the war. Within a year she built a successful cleaning business](#)  
SBS: [Valentina from Ukraine was able to open a business in Australia on a humanitarian visa](#)  
SBS: ["Ukrainian Small Business Day aims to inspire the community"](#)

[SBS](#) and [7News](#) had video interviews with displaced Ukrainians in Australia.

With people’s protection visas expiring in less than a year now, they still don’t have even the slightest bit of certainty about their future, when their home country is ravaged by war. Based on the research and widely available information about the cohort of displaced Ukrainians in Australia, including them into the Humanitarian Program for 2024-2025 would have tangible benefits and would not require significant spending or any further settlement assistance.

On behalf of all the Ukrainians in Australia and elsewhere, we are grateful for the Department’s kind consideration of this submission. Should any additional details be required, AFUO will be happy to provide them.

## **Appendix**

### **Survey 1 (Nov 16, 2023)**

Andrew Mencinsky and Marta Artemenko on behalf of the Ukrainian Council of NSW had a meeting with the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration. Mr Mencinsky and Ms Artemenko presented [a survey](#) conducted among displaced Ukrainians in NSW. The survey received 546 responses.



## Contents

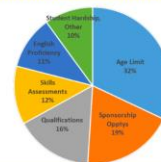
- 1 Issue Summary, Recommendations and Areas for Investigation
- 2 Qualifications/Age/Employment Analysis
- 3 Case Studies – Challenges to Applying for Alternative Visas
- 4 Appendix 1 – June 2023 Survey Question Set
- 5 Appendix 2 – Nov 2023 Survey Question Set

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## 1. Issue Summary, Recommendations and Areas for Investigation

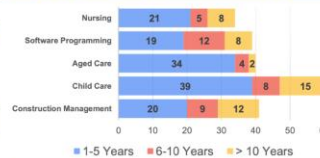
<b>1</b>	<b>Displaced Ukrainians in Australia</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just under 5,000 displaced Ukrainians on Humanitarian 786 visas nationally (arrived prior to 31 July 2022)</li> <li>Estimate of 1,000 displaced Ukrainians on Emergency Bridging Visas (arrived after 31 July 2022)</li> <li>70% of the displaced Ukrainians are women and children, with many husbands/fathers remaining in Ukraine</li> <li>Cohort is older, with ~30% over 46 years of age, with ~38% between 36-45 years of age</li> <li>60% have found employment, however only ~50% of those are working in a job related to their qualification</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Problem and Proposed Solution</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pathways to Permanent Residency (PR) post 786/EBV visa expiry are a major stressor for Ukrainian families</li> <li>Challenges identified with applying for alternative visas (see Section 6 at right) have given rise to various psychological challenges, including uncertainty, fear, depression, anxiety, insomnia and feelings of despair</li> <li>This is hindering the process of adaptation and multicultural transition</li> <li>Granting permanent residency to displaced Ukrainians would provide support, stability and confidence in their future</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Immediate Recommendations and Areas for Investigation</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation: Auto-extend 786 Humanitarian Visa for a further 3 years to remove immediate stress</li> <li>Recommendation: Develop dedicated pathways for permanent residency for displaced Ukrainians</li> <li>Investigate: Increase in number of humanitarian visas for displaced Ukrainians</li> <li>Investigate: Expand list of relatives who can sponsor for family visas (e.g. siblings, cousins etc)</li> <li>Investigate: Accelerated family reunification pathways for split families</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Benefits to Australia</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohort is highly educated, with ~34% holding a Bachelor’s Degree and ~46% holding a Master’s Degree</li> <li>Cohort is highly experienced in Top 20 Occupations in Demand (as per report from Minister for Skills and Training)</li> <li>It would contribute to the strength of our multicultural society, where people from diverse nationalities can build their future with a sense of security and stability</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Domestic and International Precedents</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia – Large scale migration program for Afghans and specific PR pathways for Hong Kong residents</li> <li>New Zealand – Dedicated residence pathway for Special Ukraine Visa holders</li> <li>Canada – Specific permanent residency pathway for Ukrainians</li> </ul>

### 6 Obstacles to applying for alternative visas



730 NSW families surveyed in June 2023, with 394 responses received. Further detail on following pages

### 7 Experience – Top 5 Occupations in Demand

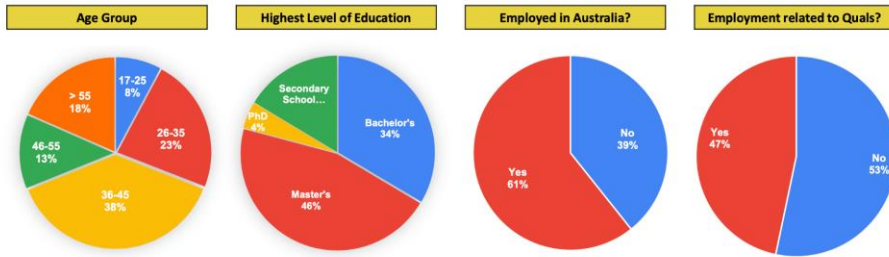


700 NSW individuals surveyed in Nov 2023, with 546 responses received. Further detail on following pages

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## 2. Qualifications/Age/Employment Analysis (1)

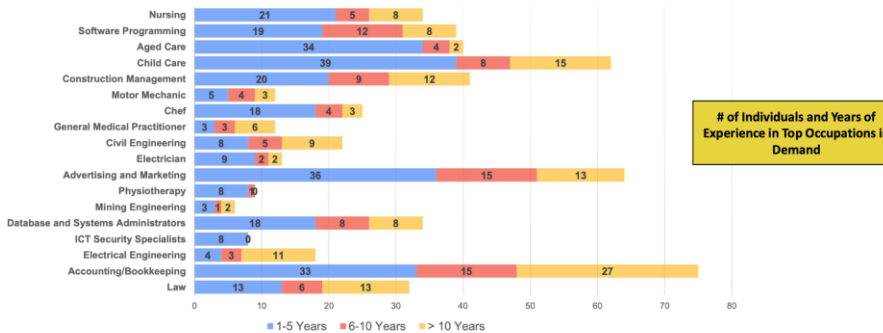
546 displaced Ukrainians responded to an employment, qualifications and age survey in Nov 2023. The survey confirmed displaced Ukrainians in Australia are motivated and highly educated and possess years of experience in the Top 20 Occupations in Demand as per the February 2023 Labour Market Update. This cohort would be of great benefit to Australia if granted permanent residency.



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## 2. Qualifications/Age/Employment Analysis (2)

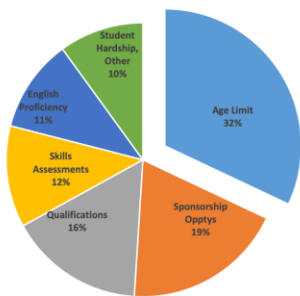
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## 3. Challenge 1: Age Limit

The age limit presents a major hindrance for displaced Ukrainians in Australia looking for potential skilled migration. 32% of respondents fall within the age range of 44 to 55, a critical period in their careers, making them ineligible to apply for certain visa categories that often lead to permanent residency (skilled visas, sponsorship visas through employers)



I have a Masters degree in Enterprise Economics, with 20 years experience in the Ukrainian banking industry. I'm studying English at TAFE and need extra time to prepare for the IELTS/PTE exams. My age (44) and English level do not allow me to apply for skilled or employer sponsored visas. People spend years and tens of thousands of dollars to prepare for their skilled/professional visa application - I don't have that time because I wasn't planning for professional migration but running away from war. The remaining time of 1 years of 786 visa (until I turn 45) isn't enough for me to prepare for application for skilled/work visas.

My current 786 visa doesn't let me apply for 866 Asylum Seeker Visa or 851 Resolution of status Visa. I'm in a state of uncertainty and cannot plan my future and future of my daughter.



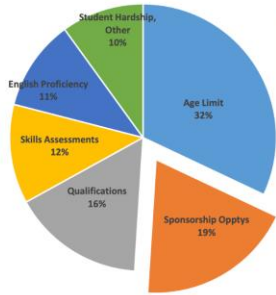
Tatiana K, 44 years old

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### 3. Challenge 2: Sponsorship Opportunities

Another prominent challenge identified in the survey is the scarcity of sponsorship opportunities from employers. Many employers are hesitant to sponsor visas due to the associated financial and administrative burdens, leading to the rejection of job applications from individuals on humanitarian visas. This lack of sponsorship possibilities significantly limits the avenues available for displaced Ukrainians to continue their residency in Australia and moreover it limits their possibility to obtain employment while on a 786 visa.



Finding a new employer to sponsor me for a working visa in Australia is proving to be a challenging task. Considering the available visa options, pursuing a Student visa is not feasible for me in the near future. I don't have immediate plans to study, and financial constraints make it unlikely for me to gather the necessary funds. My partner is also on a 786 visa and shares the same concerns. It would be a great relief if we could extend our stay in Australia after our current visa expires



Kateryna K

I have been considering the Professional Migration visa, however a main challenge is lacking local work experience in my specialised field of civil engineering. It is either impossible or extremely difficult for me to verify my work experience in Ukraine. I am constrained by the limited time on my current visa to demonstrate local experience. I have found that many companies are hesitant to hire individuals who may need to leave the country within a timeframe of less than two years. They often prefer candidates with permanent resident status



Hanna B

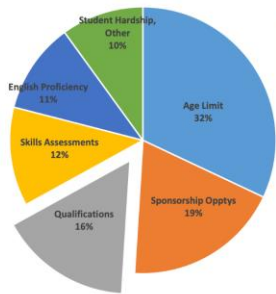
Due to my current visa, I am unable to apply for more permanent roles with employers as they see my visa status and reject me as my visa is temporary



Yulia K

### 3. Challenge 3: Qualification

Respondents reported the challenge of incompatibility of their profession with the list of in demand occupations in NSW. Many respondents expressed their intent to acquire new qualifications in Australia, especially through TAFE, but emphasised that obtaining the necessary certification and gaining relevant experience is a time-consuming process. As a result, the misalignment of their current profession with the state's demand further complicates their prospects of securing an alternative visa pathway in a timely manner



Unfortunately, my education and work experience are not relevant in Australia. I've enrolled in Diploma of Community Services and this will take 1 year. My visa will expire in May 2025 so there is no possibility to get 2 or 3 years of experience. I'm 40 and don't have enough time to pass IELTS Level 8 and apply for a working visa. I can't apply for regional visa because it will be too hard for my children to move to another region. It was too stressful for my kids to leave Ukraine and I still can see after-effects. My eldest has just calmed down and settled, found new friends, and used to new place and school. Moving to another place will be too stressful for her and will lead to new issues for her state of mind



Julia M

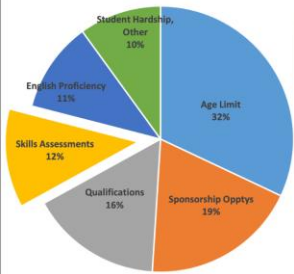
I don't have qualification or experience to fit any profession in occupation list to get work visa. I don't have enough time to obtain Australian qualification & experience, because I am a 41 year old single mother of three children (10, 13 and 15). I don't have enough emotional stability and energy to prepare while working full time (plus weekends) and raising three kids. It is impossible for one person, exhausted and escaped from the war



Oliha K

### 3. Challenge 4: Skills Assessment

Specific challenges are including but not limited to: a) **Language Barriers:** Limited English proficiency; b) **Credential Recognition:** Difficulties in having qualifications and work experience recognised; c) **Experience Gaps:** Inability to provide sufficient evidence of prior work experience due to displacement and limited documentation; d) **Skill Mismatch:** Skills acquired in Ukraine not aligning perfectly with Australia's specific demands; and e) **Financial Constraints:** Limited financial resources to cover the associated costs



I have education in Management (MBA) from Kyiv National University with honours, but this education doesn't fit too many skills assessments requirements. I worked as a Marketing team leader in Ukraine. To have my skills assessed I need 3 years of work experience, but my company have paid me officially only 2 years out of 3 due to COVID and corporate takeovers. I need help or advice how to prove that I was employed, if I haven't had paylips from day 1



Vladyslav G

My Master Degree (Engineer of Meteorology) from Ukraine not relevant to my current job in Australia (Quality Assurance Analyst), that is why I need to have 2 local years full time job for eligibility to apply to 486 visa



Kateryna L

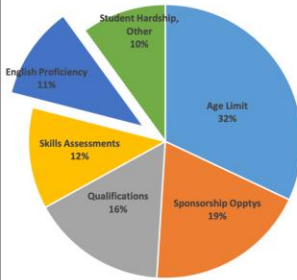
I have a Law Degree however my working experience is in ICT Industry. Skill assessment provider for my occupation (TRA) doesn't do RPL (Recognition Of Prior Learning), meaning I have the experience, knowledge, and skills acquired overseas to work in a profession, but no official educational qualification in ICT and I cannot get my qualification recognised. My wife has similar situation, she has the same degree as I do, but she works as a Retail Store Manager in Australia. It is unlikely we can get our qualifications recognised which makes it very difficult to get permanent residency



Igor Z and Manyra R

### 3. Challenge 5: English Proficiency

Displaced Ukrainians encounter significant challenges in meeting the English proficiency requirements for skilled and work visas in Australia. The emphasis is placed on the necessity of obtaining an IELTS score of 7, a demanding standard that many refugees struggle to achieve while still improving their English language skills through educational programs such as TAFE



I am currently on a 786 visa. I also found a job in my speciality in the Orange region. I am a music teacher by profession. I teach now at the Australian Conservatory. But in order to apply for a work visa, teachers need to pass an English test for the highest scores. Unfortunately, in a short time it is very difficult for me



Anna K

I am unable to apply for any visas because my English isn't good enough to pass IELTS exam. I can't collect required works documents because my town and my company is under occupation of the Russian military. I can't get enough points for skilled visas

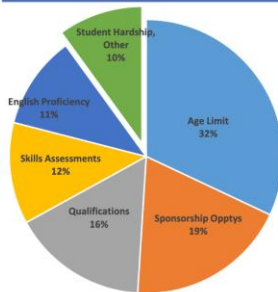


Kateryna B

10

### 3. Challenge 6: Other challenges

This section covered future students in financial hardship, traders, and other challenges



I'm 17 years old, a high school leaver, I'm on 786 visa but my parents don't have 786 visa and cannot apply for any permanent or long term visa. In about 5 months I will finish school and I don't know what to do next and what my future will be. I cannot return and study in Ukraine, my town is 30km from the frontline and not far from the city of Bakhmut. If I don't get any scholarship, I will not be able to study in Australia and apply for a student or any visas. It is very hard emotionally and is stressing me out, as I'm still at school but need to worry so much about my future. I'm top of my class in my Australian school for almost all subjects.



Oleksandra P

I've started my business from scratch, with the assistance of the organisation "Thrive" who helped with a loan. I've checked business visas conditions, and I realised that I can't adjust myself to those conditions in 2 years



Khalilula D

11

### 4. APPENDIX 1: June Survey Question Set

1	Survey Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey open from 21 June 2023 to 6 August 2023</li> <li>730 families requested to participate</li> <li>394 responses received</li> </ul>
2	Survey Question Set
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email address</li> <li>Name and Surname</li> <li>Phone number</li> <li>Would you consider staying in Australia once your 786 visa expires?</li> <li>Please explain why you are unable to apply for any other visas available in Australia?</li> <li>Please give us detailed information about your particular visa case?</li> </ol>

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## 5. APPENDIX 2: Nov Survey Question Set

<b>1</b>	<b>Survey Details</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey open from <b>8 Nov 2023</b> to <b>15 Nov 2023</b></li> <li>• <b>730</b> individuals requested to participate</li> <li>• <b>546</b> responses received</li> </ul>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Survey Question Set</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Email address</li> <li>2. Name and Surname</li> <li>3. Please confirm your age group</li> <li>4. In what LGA do you live?</li> <li>5. How many dependent children are with you in Australia?</li> <li>6. Do you have any relatives who are already in Australia?</li> <li>7. Please confirm your highest level of education</li> <li>8. Please confirm your qualification (if any)</li> <li>9. What was your occupation in Ukraine?</li> <li>10. Please confirm if you have any experience in the following areas</li> <li>11. Are you currently employed in Australia?</li> <li>12. Is your current job related to your qualification?</li> </ol>	

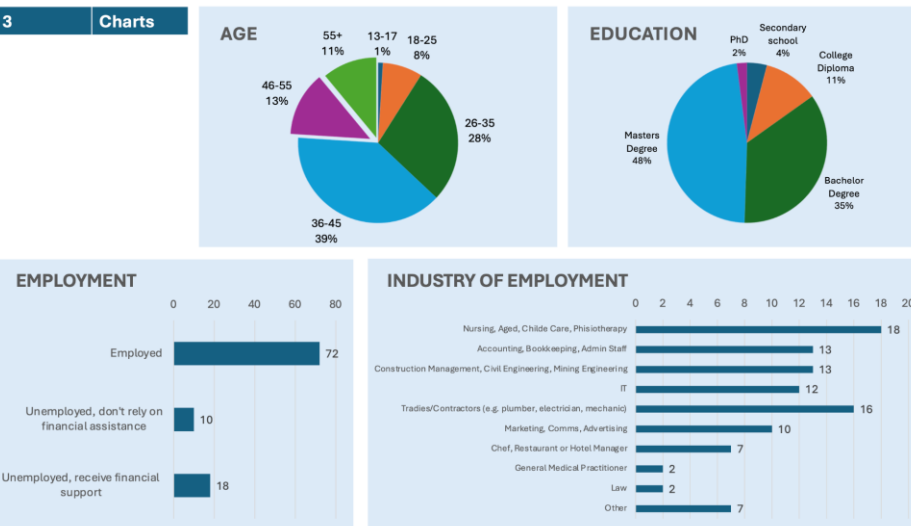
13

### Survey 2 (June 5th, 2024) –

With the approval of AFUO, Vlad Guz and Liza Marian conducted a research among Ukrainian 786 and BVA visa holders in June 2024. The survey received 637-801 responses.

<b>1</b>	<b>Survey Details</b>
<p>Survey open from <b>1 June 2024</b> to <b>5 June 2024</b>  <b>2000 individuals</b> requested to participate  <b>637 – 801 responses</b> received depending on question                  The survey was held on the AFUO affiliated Telegram channel “Ukrainians in Australia, news”, organised by Vlad Guz and Lisa Marian and conducted in June 2024 with the approval of AFUO.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Survey Questions</b>
<p><b>Questions subclass 786 and BVA visa holders:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Age</li> <li>– Highest level of Education</li> <li>– Employment status</li> <li>– Is your current job related to your qualification, or is it in the Skilled Occupation List?</li> <li>– Employment industry/sector</li> <li>– How many eligible years of work experience could you have confirmed under the Skills assessment guidelines?</li> <li>– How many years of work experience do you have in total?</li> <li>– What challenges do you face in applying for Permanent residency?</li> </ul> <p><b>Questions to all community members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do you participate in volunteering or community activities?</li> <li>– What is your income bracket?</li> </ul>	

1



2



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