



Chaldean Australian Society Inc.

CAS Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2016-17

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For further information about this CAS submission contact Dr Emad Arabo, Secretary and Administration Coordinator, at email: earabo@chaldeanauss.org.au and phone: (02) 9728 4170

Chaldean Australian Society Incorporated
6/25 Barbara Street, Fairfield NSW 2165
PO Box: 961 Fairfield NSW 1860
Phone: (02) 9728 4170 Fax: (02) 9728 1540
E-mail: cas@chaldeanauss.org.au or chaldeanaus@live.com Website: www.chaldeanauss.org.au

About the Chaldean Australian Society (CAS)

The Chaldean Australian Society (CAS) is a community-based and not-for-profit organisation established in 1993 to serve the Chaldean community in NSW. CAS addresses the settlement needs to the increasing numbers of Chaldeans arriving to Australia under humanitarian entry and family reunion and the majority of them settle in Fairfield, Liverpool, Mount Druitt and South Western Sydney areas. CAS maintains the Chaldean culture and at the same time assists the engagement of Chaldeans with the Australian society. CAS provides advocacy, information and referral, settlement-related advice, community development programs, and social activities.

For more information about CAS, visit our website: www.chaldeanauss.org.au

About the Chaldeans

The Chaldeans are the indigenous people of Iraq who speak the Chaldean language, a form of Aramaic, in addition to Arabic, the official language in Iraq. Chaldeans are Eastern Rite Catholic, led by the Patriarch of Babylon and affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The Chaldeans form the major part of Iraqi Christians.

The Chaldeans in Australia

The migration of the Chaldeans to Australia began in the 1970s. There are now more than 22,000 Chaldeans in Australia most of them in Sydney and Melbourne. In recent years there has been increasing migration of Chaldeans to Australia due to the war and events in Iraq. According to the Settlement Report^[1], published by Department of Social Services: (4,080) Chaldean Catholic migrants settled in Australia from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2015. In Sydney most of Chaldeans live in Fairfield, Liverpool, and South Western Sydney areas. In Melbourne most of Chaldeans live in Hume city area.

The Situation of the Chaldeans in Iraq and Neighbouring Countries

In the last 12 years after the 2003 events in Iraq, the Chaldeans as all Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities suffered and they are still suffering from persecution in their home country Iraq. A number of Chaldeans were accepted as refugees in Australia. As Australians, Iraqis, and Chaldeans we appreciate this and we are very grateful to Australian government for resettling in Australia Iraqi refugees over the previous years.

The situation in Iraq is still critical and still there is persecution against the Christians (Chaldean, Syriac, Assyrian, and others). Terrorist organisations (groups and members) in Iraq are targeting, threatening, torturing, and even killing Christians and consequently many Christians fled Iraq for their safety to seek asylum in countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

In 2014 the Islamic State, a jihadist militant group, occupied Mosul city and Christian towns and villages in Nineveh plain, Nineveh province, in north of Iraq. ISIL has occupied Tikrif, Batnaya, Tikf, Qaraqosh, Bartella, Karmless, and other Christian habitations. Christians were forced to flee from Mosul city and Nineveh plain to the Kurdistan region or to the neighbouring countries to Iraq like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan and since 2014 they are living in very bad conditions. The Christian community in Mosul and Nineveh plain is almost as old as Christianity itself. About 120,000 Christians fled Mosul city and Nineveh plain. For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul and Nineveh plain are now empty of Christians.

The Christians lost everything. They lost their towns and villages. Their towns and villages are still occupied by ISIL. They lost their lands, possessions, jobs, money and a number of them lost family's members, relatives, or friends. They lost everything for just being Christian.

CAS Points of Views Regarding Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2016-17

1- Chaldeans Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Neighbouring Countries to Iraq

The Chaldeans refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries to Iraq are in very critical conditions and in need for all types of support from the international community including the Australian community. The humanitarian aid and resettlement are required to help them. Our society (Chaldean Australian Society) serves and supports Chaldean people in Sydney and there are many concerns from our Chaldean members to the situation of their families, relatives and friends in Iraq and in the neighbouring countries.

We hope the Australian government will continue providing resettlement in Australia to Iraqi Chaldean asylum seekers in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Syria including those who are recently displaced from Mosul city and Nineveh plain and this is because:

- They are genuine refugees
- The degree of persecution and discrimination they face is very high (they lost everything)
- They have links to Australia through their families, relatives, friends and Chaldean community who are willing to support them

Recommendation 1: The Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2016-17 to consider widely Iraqi Chaldean refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring countries to Iraq like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Syria.

2- Australia's response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis

The Australian government has announced a package of assistance in response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis and this includes a total of 12,000 humanitarian places have been made available for people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

This is very good news reflecting the compassion and generosity of the Australian government and the Australians to the humanitarian disasters.

We hope this program to include Chaldean Iraqi refugees for:

- They fled persecution in Iraq and with no prospect of ever returning safely to their homes (for the reasons mentioned previously).
- Most of them fled Iraq to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey
- They are families, women and children in need and most vulnerable.

This means the criteria of the Australian government for priority of these places (12,000) apply widely to Chaldean refugees.

We have the following points of view regarding this 12,000 humanitarian places:

- There is delay in processing the applications of refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. From the generous announcement of the Australian government on 9th Sept 2015 about these places there was intention to bring these refugees to Australia as soon as possible. Just a very few numbers (tens) from these 12,000 arrived to Australia. We hope the Australian government to speed up the resettlement process and bring these refugees to Australia.
- The refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are living in a very critical situation with everyday suffering and arriving one day earlier to Australia means a lot to them.
- Priorities to be given to those who are supported and proposed by family members and community organisations here in Australia. We think a refugee with reliable reference(s) here in Australia gives more credibility to his case and his character

concerns. This may help the department regarding character and security checks of the applicants and to decide granting the visa.

- Processing the applications on an orderly basis. Those who are waiting (for long times or years) for processing their application to Australia deserve to be treated under an orderly process. The date of lodging the application to be the basis for considering processing and finalising the application.
- Most Iraqi places to be granted for Iraqi ethnic and religious minorities who are suffering from persecution in Iraq and from the Islamic State (ISIL) violence in northern Iraq and have no safe haven to stay in Iraq.

Recommendation 2: Speeding up the application and resettlement process to bring these 12,000 refugees from Iraq and Syria to Australia.
The Australian Government to act with more urgency in rescuing the 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey it has promised to resettle in Australia.

Recommendation 3: Priorities to be given to those who are supported and proposed by references (family members, relatives and community organisations) here in Australia. These references may be helpful for character and security checks of the applicants.

Recommendation 4: Most Iraqi places to be granted for Iraqi ethnic and religious minorities who are suffering from persecution in Iraq and have no safe haven to stay in Iraq.

References:

- 1- Settlement Reports: Top 25 Religions by Migration Stream, Department of Social services
[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2015/religion_by_migration_stream - april 2010 to march 2015.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2015/religion_by_migration_stream_-_april_2010_to_march_2015.pdf)

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