

THE NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

OUR PLAN FOR
PROTECTING
OUR BORDERS

GETTING
IT DONE 
for Regional Australia

Key points

Only the **Coalition** can be trusted to keep **Australians safe and our border secure**.

A re-elected Coalition Government will **never allow a repeat of the border chaos** we saw under Labor.

The Coalition's strong border policies **stopped the boats**, ending deaths at sea and the illegal trade of people smuggling.

By contrast, when the last Labor government dismantled our strong and effective border policies, lives were lost, chaos erupted and thousands of children were locked up in detention.

When **Labor** was last in government:

- More than **50,000 people arrived illegally** on more than **800 boats**.
- There were at least **1,200 deaths at sea**.
- More than **8,000 children were detained**.
- 17 onshore detention centres were opened.
- Two offshore processing centres were opened.

The Coalition Government has worked to turn this terrible Labor legacy around.

Thanks to our strong border protection policies, we have:

- Successfully implemented **Operation Sovereign Borders**, which ended the deaths at sea.
- Closed 19 detention centres, saving taxpayers more than \$1 billion every year.
- Removed all children from held detention and from Manus and Nauru.
- Ended Labor's regional processing arrangement with Papua New Guinea and signed a memorandum of understanding to establish an enduring regional processing capability in Nauru.
- Repealed the disastrous Labor-Greens 'Medevac' legislation.
- Successfully resettled or returned more than 1,700 people, including 1,000 under the US resettlement agreement, and recently finalised a resettlement arrangement with New Zealand for up to 450 people.

When the pandemic hit, the Coalition Government moved **swiftly to close Australia's international border** as the world waited for a vaccine to be developed. This strong and decisive action, controlling inbound and outbound movements through strict exemptions, helped deliver **one of the lowest COVID death rates in the world**. At the same time we continued to **bring in the critical skills our economy needed** and charted a safe reopening of the international border.

We have also modernised our border security system, replacing the paper-based arrival cards with a **state-of-the-art Digital Passenger Declaration**, and supported airports around the country to upgrade their physical security settings.

Under the Coalition Government, Australia remains one of the most generous humanitarian resettlement countries, and we have committed to provide at least 31,500 places for displaced and at-risk Afghan nationals over the next four years. We are also providing generous visa support to Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression.

We are strict about who comes to Australia, and who stays. That's why we have refused or cancelled more than 10,000 visas on character grounds since 2014 and updated our **Australian Citizenship Test and Australian Values Statement to strengthen aspiring citizens' understanding of and commitment to our values.**

Foreign criminals in immigration detention should not receive free rent, food and medical treatment before they are removed from Australia. A re-elected Coalition Government will pass new laws to ensure **foreign criminals face the cost of their own immigration detention.**

A re-elected Coalition Government will ensure Australia's borders remain safe and secure by:

- **Maintaining Operation Sovereign Borders:** the strong and proven policy that saves lives, and tackles people smuggling and irregular migration.
- **Sustaining the three vital pillars of our border policies:** regional processing, boat turn-backs where it is safe to do so and temporary protection visas.
- **Continuing to take a hard line stance against non-citizen criminals:** by cancelling or refusing the visas of those who commit serious crimes, and strengthening the grounds for doing so.
- **Reopening the border:** continue to manage our international border reopening during the pandemic by balancing the health and economic needs of our country.
- **Bringing in more skilled workers:** through a greater proportion of skilled workers in the annual migration program.
- **Providing support for genuine refugees:** continue to deliver one of the world's most generous humanitarian programs, in addition to providing 31,500 places for those displaced by the Afghanistan crisis.
- **Boosting front line border staff:** to stop drugs, weapons and other illegal goods from entering our shores.
- **Investing in border biosecurity:** to ensure that we protect our natural environment and our industries.

Our Plan

1. Operation Sovereign Borders

The Coalition Government will continue our strong and proven Operation Sovereign Borders policy which has saved lives, stopped the people smugglers and allowed us to remove all children from held detention.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Maintain our policy of regional processing, boat turn-backs where it is safe to do so, and temporary protection visas.
- Continue to fund our strong border security arrangements through Operation Sovereign Borders, including maintaining maritime surveillance and enhancing capabilities.
- Continue to work with our regional partners to combat people smugglers and disrupt irregular migration.

The 2022-23 Budget provided an additional \$136.7 million to maintain the Australian Border Forces' maritime surveillance and response capability. This funding continues the Coalition Government's commitment to maintaining strong borders.

2. Dealing with foreign criminals

The Coalition Government has strengthened our ability to kick foreign criminals out of Australia and cancelled or refused the visas of more than 10,000 foreign criminals.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Pass new laws to toughen the character test, enabling visa cancellations and refusals over a greater range of circumstances for non-citizens with criminal convictions.
- Continue to use every power available to us to cancel and refuse visas for foreign criminals and remove them from Australia.

In 2009, Labor abolished detention debts for foreign criminals, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill while they sit in immigration detention and fight deportation. Labor is soft on foreign criminals.

A re-elected Coalition Government will pass new laws to ensure **foreign criminals face the cost of their own immigration detention.**

3. Reopening the international border

The Coalition Government will continue to manage our international border reopening by balancing the health and economic needs of our country.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Deliver a flexible and responsive visa program that ensures Australia has the vital skills needed to cement our economic recovery.
- Continue to roll out the new Digital Passenger Declaration to ensure a seamless process for those travelling to Australia.

- Invest in the Australian Border Force to ensure they have the people, tools and legislation to maintain an efficient and secure international border.

4. Protecting our border from threats

The Coalition Government has boosted frontline border staff, increasing efforts to stop drugs, weapons and illicit tobacco at our border.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Keep increasing front line border staff to stop drugs, weapons and other illegal goods. The 2022-23 Budget provided an additional \$28 million to increase the presence of the Australian Border Force at airports, seaports and warehouses.
- Continue to support airports to upgrade their security systems to better detect the movement of illegal goods.
- Deliver the reformed security standards for staff at airports and seaports to ensure no one with links to criminal gangs can work in sensitive areas of our ports.
- Continue to protect our natural marine resources by cracking down on illegal fishing in Australian waters.

5. Maintain a flexible and responsive Humanitarian and Migration Program

A re-elected Coalition Government will build on Australia's successful pandemic response and recovery by targeting young, highly-skilled and motivated migrants to contribute to Australia:

- Bringing in more of the skilled workers that Australia needs to deliver our economic recovery.
- Continuing to deliver one of the world's most generous humanitarian programs, with at least 13,750 places in 2022-23.
- Providing at least 31,500 places in the Humanitarian and Migration Programs for those displaced by the Afghanistan crisis, prioritising former Locally Engaged Employees, those with links to Australia and vulnerable groups including women and children.
- Continuing to support Ukrainian nationals fleeing Russian aggression with generous visa support.
- Cutting down the processing times of Partner visas by moving to a demand-driven system.

6. Protecting our natural environment, our industries and our communities

Australia is free from many of the world's most damaging pests, weeds and diseases and we have worked hard to safeguard our unique environment and our 'clean and green' reputation, so critical to our primary industries.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Continue to invest more than \$1 billion annually in biosecurity and export services.
- Continue to deliver *Commonwealth Biosecurity 2030* – our strategic roadmap to defend Australia’s environment, economy and way of life from these threats.
- Deliver \$61.6 million announced in the 2022-23 Budget to boost our northern biosecurity frontline – focusing on lumpy skin disease – with more detector dogs and Indigenous biosecurity officers and investment in biosecurity infrastructure, industry resilience and emerging diagnostic and surveillance technologies.
- Continue to act and manage the emerging risk of foot and mouth disease in Indonesia and provide our neighbour with assistance to manage this outbreak.
- Continue to invest in and use technology to detect ‘risk material’ such as 3D x-ray machines, with the world’s first algorithm resulting in doubling of airport detections and tripling of those in the mail.
- Continue to respond to increasing suspicious air and sea movements through stronger pre-border biosecurity screening, offshore commercial treatments and reporting on international aircraft and non-commercial maritime vessels, and increased penalties and cancellation of visas on biosecurity-related grounds.

Our Record

Stopping the boats

The Morrison Government's strong border protection policies have successfully protected our borders, stopped the people smugglers and prevented people risking their lives at sea.

- The last successful maritime people smuggling venture arrived in July 2014; all passengers were taken to Nauru.
- Since the Coalition was elected in 2013, we have closed 19 detention centres – saving \$1 billion a year – and removed all children from held detention.
- The Morrison Government repealed the reckless Labor-Green 'Medevac' legislation, which undermined Australia's strong border protection policies.

The Morrison Government also ended Labor's regional processing arrangement with Papua New Guinea and signed a memorandum of understanding to establish an enduring regional processing capability in Nauru.

We have also continued to successfully return or resettle more than 1,700 people who arrived in Australia illegally, including more than 1,000 under a resettlement arrangement with the US, and recently finalised a resettlement arrangement with New Zealand for up to 450 people.

Managing our borders through COVID-19

The Coalition Government's strong border settings, controlling inbound and outbound movements with strict exemptions, helped ensure Australia had one of the lowest COVID death rates in the world.

We delivered a practical plan, working with the states and territories, to chart our way out of the pandemic and safely reopen to the world.

Despite a dramatic cut to international flights and restrictions to sea freight, the Government quickly developed supply chain strategies to ensure Australians could receive the goods needed to treat and respond to COVID, including vaccines, ventilators, masks and other personal protective equipment.

Protecting our border from threats with record seizures of illegal drugs and weapons

Under the Coalition Government, more illegal drugs, weapons and goods have been seized than ever before. We're keeping our communities safe from those who would do us harm.

In 2021, more than 23 tonnes of drugs and precursors were seized at the Australian border, a 10-year record. And despite the pandemic, air and sea cargo detections in 2021 were more than double the previous year. More than 1.2 tonnes of undeclared tobacco were also stopped at our borders in 2020-21 – representing evaded duties of more than \$1.92 billion.

In 2020-21, more than 20,000 weapons and dangerous goods and more than 1,000 firearms and related items were detected at the Australian border.

Between 1 July 2021 and 31 March 2022, the Australian Border Force seized equipment and gear from 296 boats and sent them packing, while 41 unseaworthy foreign fishing vessels were seized for destruction.

Protecting our community from foreign criminals

The Coalition Government has continued to act decisively to protect the Australian community from foreign criminals, murderers, paedophiles and rapists by:

- Cancelling or refusing more than 10,000 visas on character grounds since 2014, including more than 1,200 in 2021 alone.
- Introducing legislation to further strengthen the Character Test to broaden existing discretionary powers to include those convicted of violent and sexual crimes, breaching AVOs and using or possessing a weapon.
- Issuing a new Ministerial Direction that family violence and unacceptable behaviour towards vulnerable people is a primary consideration in the character test when making visa determinations.

At the same time, we welcomed more than 200,000 new Australian citizens into our Australian family in 2019-20, the highest number on record, and introduced an updated Australian Citizenship Test and Australian Values Statement to strengthen aspiring citizens' understanding and commitment to our values. This was the first update of the test in more than a decade.

Flexibility during COVID-19

During the pandemic, the Morrison Government actively reviewed the immigration and visa system to meet Australia's workforce needs and keep our economy moving.

- We continued to bring in the critical skills required, with the introduction of the Priority Migration Skills Occupation List.
- We introduced flexibility for Student Visa holders to temporarily work longer to address labour shortages and help businesses.
- We introduced the free Pandemic Event Visa in response to critical workforce shortages to allow skilled people to remain in Australia for up to 12 months.
- We established the Global Business and Talent Taskforce to attract talent to Australia to boost local jobs, resulting in more than 4,900 full-time jobs and over \$3 billion of projected investment.
- We implemented a suite of measures to support the return of international students and graduates, bolstering the international education sector.

We are also focused on delivering a ready and able workforce to address the needs of Regional Australia:

- We have introduced a new Australian Agriculture Visa for workers across the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors as they strive to reach \$100 billion in value by 2030.

- We are reforming our labour mobility programs (Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Program) to make them easier to access, protect worker welfare and better meet the needs of regional Australia.
- We have introduced new opportunities to encourage migrants to settle in regional Australia, granting more than 48,000 visas since their introduction in 2019.

A generous Humanitarian Program

Under the Coalition Government, Australia remains one of the most generous humanitarian resettlement countries, providing a new home and support for those in most need.

We acted swiftly during the Afghanistan crisis in August 2021, evacuating more than 4,500 people to safety from Kabul. The Morrison Government also committed \$27.1 million to provide Afghan evacuees with the resettlement services they need at a time of great difficulty, and \$37.3 million in new measures to drive better settlement and integration outcomes for all refugees and humanitarian entrants.

We have committed to providing at least 31,500 places for Afghan nationals over the next four years through our Humanitarian and Migration programs, prioritising former locally engaged employees and their families, those with enduring links to Australia and minority groups including women and girls.

We are also strongly supporting Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression. For those Ukraine nationals who have been forced to flee Russia's military invasion, and who wish to join family and friends in Australia, we are providing access to three year Temporary Humanitarian Concern visas. This visa provides access to work and study rights, health services including Medicare, and social and settlement support services. The Coalition Government has committed to providing a permanent visa pathway at the end of three years for those who wish to settle in Australia permanently.

Maintaining our biosecurity through the pandemic

During the pandemic the Coalition government safeguarded our natural environment, industries and communities from the risk of new and emerging pests and diseases. Through the pandemic we redeployed biosecurity officers to manage the safe arrival of vital goods at our airports and ports.

We have invested in biosecurity and export programs that protect our international reputation, increasing spending in real terms since 2016-17 by 33 per cent.

Since the 2021-22 Budget we have invested more than \$590 million in measures to better manage biosecurity risks while facilitating safe trade, with a focus on new and emerging regional and global pest and disease risks, including:

- a new One Health initiative aimed at preventing, detecting, and mitigating the impacts of emerging animal diseases, including those with pandemic potential.
- a mass dog vaccination program in Bali to protect locals and their dogs from rabies and reduce the threat of rabies in our region.

- improved our ability to detect and manage threats offshore through improving our intelligence capabilities, collaborating with our near neighbours, managing the risk posed by hitchhiker pests and strengthening our national preparedness, as well reducing the economic and environmental burden of established feral animals, pests, and weeds.
- delivered, through the \$5.5 million per year Biosecurity Innovation Program, innovative technologies and approaches to enable detection of pests and diseases more effectively and efficiently at the border, such as eDNA for khapra beetle, AI app for brown marmorated stink bug and the Multi-Hazard Detector machine - which can detect vapour and gas particles in the air - to increase reliability in detecting biosecurity threats and reduce wait times for cargo clearance.
- collaborating with New Zealand to develop world leading biosecurity risk detection technology to streamline border operations and optimise biosecurity outcomes across mail, traveller and air cargo pathways.
- partnering with industry to pilot whether importers can demonstrate their ability to manage biosecurity risk across their supply chains and achieve equal or better biosecurity outcomes, generating considerable interest within the import sector.

The Coalition Government has also made changes to biosecurity laws to increase penalties for those people who do the wrong thing, increasing infringement notice penalties and new visa cancellation powers for serious breaches with 16 visas cancelled to date.

And we have strengthened pandemic preparedness and response at the border, amending the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to strengthen the management of biosecurity risks to human health posed by maritime and aviation arrivals.

The Risk of Labor

This election is a choice.

Labor leader Albanese has never held a financial portfolio. He's never held a national security portfolio.

On major policy issues – **like boat turnbacks, and offshore processing** – he flip-flops.

Albanese was part of a government that **cut Defence spending to the lowest level since 1938**, as a proportion of GDP.

In uncertain times, Australia can't risk Labor on defence, security and our borders.

COALITION	LABOR
<p>Boat arrivals</p> <p>The Coalition Government introduced Operation Sovereign Borders, which has stopped the boats. The last successful boat arrival occurred in 2014.</p>	<p>Boat arrivals</p> <p>Labor's failed border protection policies resulted in more than 50,000 people arriving illegally on more than 800 boats and at least 1,200 deaths at sea.</p> <p>Labor cannot manage our borders. A Labor government will be the green light for people smugglers to restart their evil trade.</p>
<p>Operation Sovereign Borders</p> <p>The Coalition Government will maintain Operation Sovereign Borders to keep the boats stopped, including maintaining our policies of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● regional processing ● boat turn-backs where it is safe to do so ● temporary protection visas. 	<p>Operation Sovereign Borders</p> <p>Labor has flip-flopped on maintaining all the elements of Operation Sovereign Borders.</p> <p>They were against turn-backs, now they pretend they are for them.</p> <p>They say they're supporting Operation Sovereign Borders, but they say they'll abolish temporary protection visas and give thousands of illegal arrivals permanent visas.</p> <p>This is a disastrous dismantling of the policy that has so successfully stopped the boats.</p>
<p>Detention Centres</p> <p>The Coalition has closed 19 detention centres, saving \$1 billion a year, and removed all children from held detention.</p>	<p>Detention Centres</p> <p>Labor opened 17 additional detention centres at great cost to the nation.</p>

COALITION	LABOR
<p>'Medevac' legislation</p> <p>The Morrison Government repealed the reckless Labor-Green 'Medevac' legislation, which undermined Australia's strong border protection policies.</p>	<p>'Medevac' legislation</p> <p>Labor teamed up with the Greens to introduce the 'Medevac' legislation, which undermined Australia's strong border protection policies by creating a backdoor into Australia for people who arrived illegally by boat.</p>
<p>Foreign Criminals</p> <p>The Morrison Government is tough on foreign criminals, murderers, paedophiles and rapists, cancelling or refusing more than 10,000 visas on character grounds since 2014. This included 330 members of organised crime or bkie gangs.</p>	<p>Foreign Criminals</p> <p>Labor does not have the courage to stand up to foreign criminals.</p> <p>Labor still hasn't committed to passing legislation for stronger character tests on visa holders, which would prevent foreign criminals entering or staying in Australia.</p> <p>In Opposition, Labor has voted more than 77 times against measures to strengthen our borders.</p>
<p>Resettlement</p> <p>The Morrison Government ended Labor's regional processing arrangement with Papua New Guinea and signed a memorandum of understanding to establish an enduring regional processing capability in Nauru.</p> <p>More than 1,700 people who arrived in Australia illegally have been resettled or returned, including 1,000 under a resettlement arrangement with the United States.</p>	<p>Resettlement</p> <p>As a result of their mismanagement of the border, Labor left a caseload of more than 30,000 unresolved asylum cases.</p> <p>Now they want to give these illegal arrivals permanent visas.</p>
<p>Humanitarian program</p> <p>Under the Coalition Government, Australia has maintained one of the most generous humanitarian programs in the world.</p> <p>We have also committed to providing at least 31,500 places for Afghan nationals, through our Humanitarian and Family Visa Program over four years.</p>	<p>Humanitarian program</p> <p>Labor cannot manage our borders.</p> <p>It is only because of our strong border protection policies that we can maintain our generous humanitarian program.</p>

COALITION	LABOR
<p>Border management</p> <p>The Coalition has digitised our border management system, introducing a Digital Passenger Declaration to replace the paper-based Australia Travel Declaration. This has reduced processing times for passengers.</p> <p>Despite the global pandemic, air and sea cargo detections under the Coalition Government in 2021 were more than double the previous year (2020/21 – 28,740, compared to 2019/20 – 11,027).</p>	<p>Border management</p> <p>To pay for their mismanagement, Labor cut the resources of critical frontline border control agencies, leaving our borders exposed to significant and unnecessary risk, and increased delays for passengers at airports.</p> <p>Labor cut nearly 700 staff from Customs when their responsibilities were being increased due to the flood of illegal boat arrivals, and introduced budgetary cuts to Customs of \$735 million.</p> <p>Under Labor, sea cargo inspections decreased by 25%, with a 75% reduction in air cargo inspections.</p>

Cost

Funding for the Coalition's Plan for Protecting Our Borders is already provided for within Budget estimates.

THE NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

 For further details of The Nationals' Plan go to: www.nationals.org.au