

# AUSTRALIA

Australia is a monarchy belonging to the geographical region of Oceania. The capital city is Canberra and Australia's total population is estimated to be around 25 million. UNHCR currently estimates that 60,000 refugees are in Australia, which constitutes about 0.24% of the country's population.

## Negotiation guidelines

Australia has been heavily criticized internationally for launching a "Stop The Boats" policy, whereby boats carrying people fleeing to Australia are forced to turn back upon arrival. If this issue is raised in negotiations, you can argue that the policy is meant to stop human smuggling, as it is often human traffickers who are in charge of the boats.

As a representative of Australia, you may favourably steer the negotiations towards SRHR to gain a moral advantage. You believe that SRHR for young people is important and want to emphasize this; it in turn allows you to criticize countries that do not prioritize SRHR for young people as highly. On this issue, you can collaborate with the EU and the USA, which hold similar positions. Regarding family reunification, it is advisable to ally with Thailand.

## Family reunification

Australia's views on family reunification are strict. Only Australian citizens or permanent residents of the country can apply to bring in their closest family members, namely spouse/partner, child or parent – provided that the applicant is under the age of 18. The relatives arriving must be guaranteed economic support. In that sense, it is virtually impossible for children on the move in Australia to be reunited with their parents in Australia.

If parents have a residence permit and want to bring in their child that is residing abroad, it is generally approved if the parents have the ability to support the child. Since August 2012, people entering Australia illegally by boat have no right to apply for family reunification.

Australia has, however, signed a resolution named "Rights of the child: Realizing the rights of the child and family reunification". In it, they emphasize the importance of ensuring that all unaccompanied children, as well as children who have been separated from their parents, should have access to a family reunification process. The resolution expresses deep concern that millions of children worldwide are forced to grow up without parents and confirms the need to address the root causes of family separation, with great emphasis placed on showing support for all children and their families through necessary protection.

## Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Australia believes that investment in SRHR, such as sex education, for young refugees is important, as it can reduce the number of cases of hiv/aids and unwanted pregnancies. Abortion laws in Australia vary by state, but the general view is that abortion should be allowed only if the pregnancy can be harmful to the girl's or woman's mental or

physical health, as well as in cases of rape or incest. Maternal health care services is something Australia prioritizes, especially for children on the move since they are in a very vulnerable position.

#### **The right to complain to the UN**

Australia has not ratified the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that allows children to complain if their rights under the Convention have been violated.

Australia has a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur. However, under the 2015 Border Security Act, Australia enacted a law that prohibits individuals such as doctors and teachers, who are working in the refugee camps from reporting to the outside world. These camps are located near Australia's coast, often in Papua New Guinea or Nauru. Breaking this law may result in imprisonment for up to two years. The UN Special Rapporteur for the rights of migrants has therefore chosen not to visit the refugee camps, as it may cause legal problems for those who choose to speak up about conditions there. Australia argues that the purpose of the law isn't to prevent people from reporting abuses, but only to ensure that confidential information won't spread. Australia is not supportive of a special rapporteur for children on the move.

