From Great to Greater: Smart Investment is Reducing Protection Visa and Appeals Backlogs and Cutting Costs



The <u>2023–25 funding to address protection visa backlogs</u> has been a success: a fairer system, reduced pressure on tribunals and courts, saving money and resources. A separate Department of Home Affairs grant for initial protection visa applications has achieved the same impact.

Extending funding for initial protection and appeals through the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (**MYEFO**) will lock in efficiencies achieved and advance further value for the whole system.

1. Addressing System Failure – Commending Government Leadership



Commonwealth Investment Provides Relief to the System and Reduces Costs

At the peak of the backlog, **50,000 people faced six-year waits**—an expensive failure. Commonwealth funding has already turned the tide. This investment is realising **a fairer and faster protection system.**

2. Data-Driven Success Story

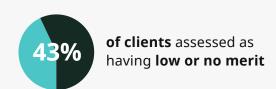


Evidence in Action: Early, Independent and Free Legal Advice Drives System Efficiency

Circle Green Community Legal's success story is the <u>Protection Visa and Appeals Legal Service</u> – a **data-driven, model of early intervention legal service** addressing critical backlogs in Australia's protection visa system, made possible by the backlog funding.

Circle Green has consistently reported to funders on the <u>trials and testing that form the first evidence base</u> demonstrating the **impact of funded legal assistance in reducing the backlog**.

Protection Visa Initial Data





From this group



70% are leaving the system following our advice

This is a **significant number of people being diverted from the legal system**. These people are departing Australia or are enroute to pursuing alternative visa or other options.

Protection Visa Appeals Data





From this group



18% are leaving the system following our advice

This is **also a significant number of people diverted from the current backlog**, though its a smaller % than initial protection applicants. Most had lodged an appeal before receiving legal advice from Circle Green. If they had received merit advice earlier, more individuals with low or no merit might have sought alternative options rather than contributing to the backlog.



Based on our data collected to date, we hypothesise that ongoing investment in early intervention legal services may result in close to a 50% reduction in the backlog.

3. Evidence of Benefits - Cost Savings & Efficiency



Everyone Wins: Lower Costs, Fewer Backlogs, Stronger System

Thanks to this funding, decision makers are already seeing **lower caseloads**, **higher quality applications** and a **better use of resources**. Continued investment will build on these gains—delivering lasting savings, smoother processes, and a stronger protection system.

Resourcing benefits of funded legal assistance realised across the whole system

Clients	Department of Home Affairs	Administrative Review Tribunal	Federal Circuit & Family Court
Fewer people left with their lives on hold for 6+ years	Faster processing, more decision-ready applications,	Shorter hearings and faster scheduling	Greater capacity to deliver clear, timely decisions
Clearer understanding of protection criteria and prospects of success	Fewer requests for further information	Streamlined evidence presented to decision makers	Better engagement between applicants and court
Faster, fairer outcomes that reduce stress and uncertainty	Reduced interview time for delegates	More active, prepared applicants ease admin load	Reduced administrative burden on court staff
Fewer fraudulent or weak claims, stronger confidence in outcomes	Strengthened integrity of the system by reduced migration fraud	Improved efficiency through consistent, quality advice	Applicants proceed with realistic expectations

Culminating in faster processing, fairer outcomes, and greater integrity — noting that WA accounts for approximately 6–8% of the national protection caseload. These resourcing benefits are expected to amplify across the system at a national level.

4. MYEFO – Reducing Future Expenses and Resource Loads



Continued Investment Delivers Long-Term Value

Appeals **funding ended** on 30 June 2025, and the Department of Home Affairs funding ends on 30 November. There is **a continued backlog** and many legal service providers are running on underspend (Circle Green until 31 December 2025).

Continued MYEFO investment will **strengthen system efficiency**, **reduce expenses**, and **ease resource pressures**. It's a fiscally smart choice that delivers lasting savings and a fairer, more sustainable protection system.

Clear Ask



Continuing funding for legal services in protection and appeal work is the **win-win choice.** It saves money, improves system efficiency, relieves pressure on decision making resources, and delivers justice more effectively and fairly.

1 Links to further service information: our evidence and reporting can be found here.