

Before the interview

When you get a notice to attend your protection visa interview at the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) make sure you find out where to go, how you will get there on time, and that you've organised things like childcare.

Sometimes DHA may want to hold the interview by video conference rather than in-person. It is usually best to have a protection visa interview face to face as you can more fully and more strongly tell your story. So if DHA requests a video interview you can argue that you need a face-to-face interview and you should give reasons and evidence why you need to be interviewed in-person (for example, a Doctor's or counsellor's letter if you suffer trauma etc.).

Before the interview, make sure you have re-read the statement in your application that you gave to DHA, and know exactly what it says. If you have found any new information, you should send it in before the interview, or present it to the DHA officer at the start of the interview.

At the interview

1. The interpreter will be introduced to you by the Immigration officer. If you can't understand the interpreter you should first ask them to go more slowly and repeat what they said. If this doesn't help, or if there are other problems, you should say so to the officer and say why. This may mean the interview has to be put off to another day with a different interpreter.
2. The Immigration officer will usually, but not always, begin the interview by telling you about the visa application process and what a refugee is.
3. You must tell the truth. The Immigration officer may ask if you want to make a promise to tell the truth on a religious book if you are a believer, or if you will just make a promise.
4. The officer will then ask many detailed questions to test:
 - your identity
 - if you are telling the truth
 - how likely it is you will suffer harm if returned to your home country
 - if that harm is serious enough to require you to be owed protection.
5. The officer will ask questions to:
 - test the information you have already put in your statement
 - test if there are any differences with what you have said before and now
 - test your story against what information DIBP has through its research

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6. Tell your whole story as much as you can remember. Do not make things up or add things you've heard from others. If you don't remember something, don't make it up. Just say you don't remember.
 7. If there are any differences in your story with any information you have given to Immigration before, then explain why there are differences.
 8. The Immigration officer can ask you questions about many things. The officer will have:
 - information you've given at all stages of processing in Australia
 - all travel records, including travel to and from countries other than Australia
 - information shared by you on social media (e.g. facebook)
 - information from other parties
 9. The officer should say if they have any information that puts doubt on your story and give you a chance to explain. If you think they have wrong information or don't have the full story you need to say so then and, if you can, also explain why you think they are wrong.
 10. If there's information you know of which you could provide after the interview that might answer the Immigration officer's concerns then say so. You will then need to provide that information soon after the interview. However, if you produce false or made up information, that will usually be found out and will seriously damage your case if the officer thinks you are making things up.
 11. If the officer wants you to send in more information after the interview they will give you a time period in which to send it. If you think that won't be enough time, tell the officer and ask if you can have more time.

After the interview

After the interview and before the officer makes the decision, you can give any new information you have received, but you need to be sure it is truthful.

If you put in information which looks as if it might be false or exaggerated (made to look worse than it really is) to try to make your case look better, then the officer will most likely think that you are untruthful and will be less likely to believe other parts of your story.

It is far better to put all your information in before the interview if that's possible.

If Immigration sends you a letter after the interview asking for more information and if you can't understand it you should then get advice from a registered migration agent/lawyer.

The decision

If you get a letter of refusal then you should get migration advice quickly.

*This Fact Sheet is legal information, not legal advice.
See a registered migration agent/lawyer for specific advice.*