

‘It’s not easy’: Why Ivan does up to 14 hours of school a day

[Jordan Baker](#), SMH, October 25, 2022

During the day, Ivan Borodin attends a Sydney primary school. He gets home at 3.30pm and has a snack. Then, from 4.30pm he does Ukrainian school online with his former classmates, who are scattered all over the world.

His teachers run the classes from different places. Sometimes it’s from their homes. Sometimes, if the bomb alarms are ringing, they’ll run them from a hiding place. Ivan knows when the bombs are falling because school is cancelled.



Ivan Borodin does Australian school during the day and Ukrainian school at night. CREDIT:FLAVIO BRANCALEONE

They cannot run lessons from the school itself because it has been partially destroyed. Of Ivan’s 36 classmates, none remain in their home city of Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine.

Ivan’s mother, Natalia Borodina (which is the female version of Borodin), wishes he did not have to work so hard. “It’s not easy,” she said. But their temporary humanitarian visa, 786, only lasts three years and under the present terms they have no option of staying longer or applying for another one.

Ukrainian school is harder than Australian school, his mother said, so if Ivan does not keep up she worries he will struggle if he goes back. “For example, part of the curriculum taught here in year 7 is taught in Ukraine in year 5,” said Borodina, who is a teacher.

The 4421 Ukrainian holders of 786 visas are also unable to return to the country if they leave, a rule causing significant distress for women who left their husbands, sons and brothers fighting in the war, and have elderly parents still in Ukraine.

Marta Artemenko from the Ukrainian Council of NSW said the vast majority of those who had fled to Australia were women and children because most men aged between 18 and 60 were not allowed to leave the country.

The anxiety deepened this month, when Russia launched missiles at several cities in Ukraine, including the capital Kyiv, and amid increasing talk about nuclear weapons. “Ukraine is without electricity, without heating, and it’s winter coming,” said Artemenko. “We are now disconnected from our families.”

Those holding a 786 visa cannot go back to visit their parents or sons, unless they seek permission from the Home Affairs department, which, said Artemenko, only grants it in the most serious circumstances, such as a death.

Those with jobs in Australia cannot travel overseas for work.

The temporary humanitarian concern visa was created more than 20 years ago to deal with the urgent need to evacuate people amid violence from pro-Indonesian militia in East Timor, and to find homes for Albanian refugees who fled from violence in Kosovo during the Balkans war.

Those who are in Australia on a temporary humanitarian visa cannot apply for a protection visa as they are not technically refugees. However, Russians leaving their country due to fear of being conscripted into the military and hoping for asylum in Australia can do so.

The Ukrainian community is calling on the federal government to use the discretion it has under the visa rules to lift some of the restrictions, such as the ban on applying for a further visa, or the ban on travelling.

“There’s uncertainty and ambiguity,” said Artemenko. “People try to build their life in Australia, they are working, they are paying taxes, but they do not know what will happen after three years, and they do not know what to do with their children.

“People are grateful that they have a safe place to stay for three years, they’re grateful that they’re alive and Australia has given them many opportunities. But if people make the effort to start their lives here from scratch, they want to know what comes next.”



Borodina’s husband was able to come with her, as men who have three children or more – as he does – are exempt, as are men who have a child with a disability, or are a single parent. But they are worried about their friends and relatives back home.

A spokesperson for the Home Affairs department said, “the Australian government is committed to ensuring that Ukrainians can continue to reside in the Australian community with access to work, health, education and visa support services”.