



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

2 February 2011

Welcome to the latest bulletin from the Refugee Council of Australia. We welcome feedback, ideas or information worth sharing. Please contact us at info@refugeecouncil.org.au.

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

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NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

A missed opportunity to scrap an unfair system

The Australian Government has missed the opportunity to establish a single, consistent and fair refugee determination system for all persons who seek asylum in Australia. The Government's response to the November 11, 2011 High Court ruling failed to address the fundamental unfairness of maintaining separate processes for asylum seekers who reach the Australian mainland and those who arrive through excised offshore territories. Under the changes announced in January, asylum seekers arriving in excised territories will undergo a new status determination process called a Protection Obligations Determination (POD). An initial assessment called a Protection Obligations Evaluation will be conducted by a DIAC officer to determine whether the asylum seeker is owed protection. If the assessment is successful, a recommendation will be made to the Minister to enable a Protection Visa application to be lodged. If the assessment is unsuccessful, the asylum seeker – instead of undergoing a full status assessment process – will be “fast tracked” to an Independent Protection Assessment. Failed applicants will have a right to appeal to the Federal Magistrates Court, Federal Court and finally the High Court if they feel that they have been denied procedural fairness or there has been a legal error in the handling of their case. They will also have the opportunity to respond to information that may be detrimental to their asylum claim. Asylum seekers in excised zones will continue to lack access to the Refugee Review Tribunal. A transcript of the press conference at which the changes were announced can be read here: www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb157099.htm. RCOA's media release on the changes on the new system can be read here:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/110107_Offshore_processing.pdf

Refugee arrests in Thailand highlight struggle for protection in South-East Asia

The arrest and detention in Bangkok of 86 refugees and asylum seekers of Pakistani origin in December 2010 highlighted the great difficulties faced by many people seeking protection from persecution. The 86 members of the Ahmadiyya faith – nearly all of them UNHCR recognised refugees or UNHCR registered asylum seekers – were arrested at their homes in a dawn raid and taken to the Bangkok Detention Centre. At least 30 of the detainees are children. RCOA has joined 25 other agencies from 13 countries in signing a statement condemning the actions of the Thai authorities and calling for the release of the arrested refugees and asylum seekers. RCOA has also called on the Australian Government to join international efforts to seek their release. The joint statement can be read here: <http://refugeerightsasiapacific.org/>. RCOA's media release on the arrests can be read here:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/221210_Thailand_arrests.pdf.

Grave concerns over Australia's MoU with Afghanistan

RCOA has joined 46 other organisations and 16 individuals in expressing grave concerns over the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Governments of Australia and Afghanistan and UNHCR. The MoU permits the involuntary repatriation of failed Afghan asylum-seekers from Australia to Afghanistan, including unaccompanied minors and other Afghan children who have become separated from their families. In a joint statement issued in 26 January, RCOA and others

called attention to the ongoing violence and security threats in Afghanistan and the continuing persecution faced by many Afghans, including members of the Hazara ethnic minority. The statement rejects the MoU and calls on the Australian Government address its humanitarian obligations and provide leadership and asylum for persons fleeing from Afghanistan. The joint statement can be read here: www.erc.org.au/mou. The text of the MoU can be read here: www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/pdf/mou-with-afghanistan-unhcr.pdf

RCOA completes national consultations

RCOA has completed its national consultations on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program and presented its annual submission to the Australian Government. The consultation process, conducted in November and December, involved more than 230 people from across Australia's eight states and territories. Participants included refugee and humanitarian entrants from at least nine different countries of origin and representatives from almost 100 organisations. Consultations were also held with 10 key NGO representatives from South-East Asia and South Asia. The submission includes 28 recommendations to the Australian Government on the planning of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, developing a sustainable regional protection framework, humanitarian family reunion and public discourse on Australia's refugee policies. It also identifies a number of priority issues relating to refugee settlement and onshore protection. RCOA presented our key recommendations to Immigration Minister Chris Bowen on January 20 at the Minister's annual meeting with peak bodies and national organisations. The submission will be discussed further with senior DIAC officials in coming weeks prior to its public release. RCOA appreciates the support of the organisations which hosted local consultations and the hundreds of people who participated.

Final phase of 2010-11 AUSCO Exchange Program commences

In September last year, RCOA selected two Guest Trainers – Nadine Liddy from the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) in Melbourne and Mohamed Baaruud from STARTTS in Sydney – to take part in the 2010-11 AUSCO Exchange Program between settlement workers in Australia and trainers delivering the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program overseas. In October 2010, CMY and STARTTS hosted a two-week attachment for two AUSCO trainers: Sarah Chou from Kuala Lumpur and Issack Mohamud from Kenya. The attachment provided an opportunity to introduce both AUSCO trainers to a broad range of programs designed for young refugees and humanitarian entrants in Australia. During the attachment, the AUSCO and Guest Trainers successfully designed and delivered two workshops to enhance the understanding of settlement service providers in Australia of AUSCO. In January 2011, the final stage of the exchange began with the deployment of Nadine to Kuala Lumpur and Mae Sot and Mohamed to Kenya and Ethiopia. The Guest Trainers will work with AUSCO trainers to develop and update the AUSCO youth curriculum and delivery methodologies to meet the needs of young refugees and humanitarian entrants attending AUSCO courses in those countries. The 2011 Exchange Program will continue to focus on strengthening the links between pre- and post-arrival orientation programs for refugees through the exchange of relevant personnel, with a particular focus on addressing issues faced by refugees from the Middle East. RCOA will be seeking Expressions of Interest for the 2011 program in late February.

High Court rejects case to release children from detention

The High Court has rejected a case launched by Sister Brigid Arthur to secure the release of four young Afghan asylum seekers from immigration detention. The four unaccompanied minors have been detained since February 2010, during which time their mental health has deteriorated significantly. While acknowledging that there was "strong and uncontested evidence" that the minors are at serious risk of psychological and other harm whilst in detention, the High Court ruled that the plaintiffs had not been able to establish that their detention was unlawful. A transcript of the decision can be read at www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/HCATrans/2011/1.html

Internal Review of Christmas Island tragedy

Customs and Border Protection has released an Internal Review of its response to the tragic boat accident which occurred on the coast of Christmas Island on 15 December 2010. The Internal Review found that Customs and Border Protection did not have any intelligence that would indicate that the boat had departed Indonesia or was likely to arrive at Christmas Island at the time that it did. It further noted that all personnel acted in accordance with the relevant policies, processes and

procedures and exercised good judgement. The Internal Review can be read here: www.customs.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/110124CustomsInternalReview.pdf

Early bird registration closing soon for 2011 Refugee Conference

The UNSW Centre for Refugee Research, together with key refugee advocates and practitioners including RCOA, is convening a conference in 2011 to mark the 60th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention. The four-day conference will provide a timely opportunity to reflect on the strengths and achievements of the Refugee Convention and refugee protection system and to consider what further action is needed to secure the rights of refugees during flight, in countries of asylum and in resettlement. It will explore the themes of regional protection frameworks, ending protracted situations and finding durable solutions. The program will include plenary sessions and workshops as well as a series of dialogues with a strong focus on the Asia-Pacific region, including a youth forum, academic workshop and a much-anticipated Women's Dialogue. The conference will be held from 14–17 June, 2011 at the University of New South Wales Kensington Campus, Sydney. **Early bird registration closes on Monday 28 February.** Further information including key dates and registration details can be found at refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au.

RCOA submission to inquiry into legislation on Children's Commissioner

RCOA has made a submission to the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into the *Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010*. In the submission, RCOA supported the establishment of a Federal Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and strongly endorsed the mandate of the Commissioner to promote and protect the rights of children and young people in immigration detention or whose parents and guardians are in immigration detention, and to act as the legal guardian of unaccompanied minors. RCOA recommended that the Office of the Commissioner adopt practices which maximise the inclusion of children and young people from refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian backgrounds and consult with community sector agencies which specialise in working with young people from multicultural backgrounds. The submission can be read here:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1012_Child_Commissioner_sub.pdf

Further information about the inquiry can be found here:

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/cwealth_commissioner_young_people/index.htm

Report of Inquiry Into new human rights legislation

The report of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee's inquiry into the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Bill 2010* and *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) (Consequential Provisions) Bill 2010* was tabled out of session on 28 January. The two Bills aim to increase consideration of human rights in the parliamentary process by establishing a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and introducing a requirement for statements of compatibility to be submitted with all Bills. The report recommends the broadening of the Joint Committee's powers to enable it to independently initiate human rights inquiries and inquire into human rights matters referred to it by either House of the Parliament. The report also recommends the addition of a provision requiring that, in cases where legislation is found to be incompatible with human rights, the extent of and reasons for incompatibilities must be clearly explained. Despite widespread concern about the Bills' limited definition of "human rights", the report does not recommend an expansion of the definition to encompass other international treaties which have a focus on human rights issues, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention. An additional comment submitted by the Australian Greens noted with particular concern the exclusion of any reference to the Refugee Convention from the Bill. The report can be read at: www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte/human_rights_bills_43/report/index.htm

RCOA's submission to the inquiry can be read at:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1010_Human_rights_sub.pdf

Australians honoured for support of refugees

The Australian Honours List announced on Australia Day 2011 included 10 people whose work in the community has included the support of refugees: Professor **Louise Newman AM**, Director of the Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, who is also involved in advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers, including as Convener of the Alliance of Health Professionals for Asylum Seekers; Ms **Margaret Piper AM**, a consultant with over two decades of experience working in the refugee sector, including as RCOA's Executive Director from 1991 to 2005; Ms **Kathy Ragless AM**,

Director of Companion House, a specialist provider of torture and trauma rehabilitation services for refugees and asylum seekers in the ACT; Mr **Peter Hallam** OAM and Mrs **Sue Hallam** OAM, founders of the Sanctuary Australia Foundation, which sponsors and assists refugees who are in desperate situations overseas to resettle in Australia; Mr **Kon Karapanagiotidis** OAM, CEO and founder of the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, Australia's largest organisation providing support and advice to asylum seekers; Ms **Nola Randall-Mohk** OAM, Chairperson of the Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre who has provided support and assistance to refugee and migrant communities for over 25 years, particularly through her work with the Khmer Community of NSW and the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women and the Australian Cambodian Association; and Mr **Ramdas Sankaran** OAM, President of the Ethnic Communities Council of WA and Executive Director of the Multicultural Services Centre of WA, which provides support to refugees and migrants in Western Australia.

The winners of the Australian Human Rights Commission's annual Human Rights Medals and Awards were announced on 10 December 2010. The Television Award was presented to the makers of *Football United: Passport to Hope*, a documentary which tells the story of Anne Bunde-Birouste's passionate work to form a team of young Australian refugee kids from countries such as Zimbabwe, Iraq, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Jordan and Sudan to represent Australia at the World Cup in South Africa. Brisbane's Immigrant Women's Support Service, which provides free, confidential support and assistance to women and their children from non-English speaking backgrounds who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence, was highly commended in the Community category.

Convention on Enforced Disappearances enters into force

Following Iraq's accession to the treaty in November 2010, the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances has entered into force. The Convention, which was drafted in 2006, prohibits enforced disappearance and secret detention and requires its parties to implement measures to prevent enforced disappearance and bring perpetrators to justice. The Convention includes a non-refoulement provision prohibiting states parties from forcibly returning a person to a State where they may be in danger of being subjected to enforced disappearance. Australia has neither signed nor ratified the Convention. The text of the Convention can be read here: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/disappearance-convention.htm

South Sudan referendum reaches majority

While the final results have not been released, the initial figures of the South Sudanese referendum showed that 2,224,857 votes for separation from the north had already been returned. This number already exceeds the simple majority of 1.89 million votes (60%) needed on the 96% turnout of the 3,932,588 registered voters. The local South Sudanese community in Australia voted overwhelmingly for independence (98%).

COMING EVENTS

Thursday 20 January to Sunday 6 February – Sydney

Welcome art exhibition

Welcome is an art exhibition being held to celebrate the day Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees (22 January) and to raise funds for the Asylum Seekers Centre of New South Wales. Entry is by donation, and 100% of the proceeds from artworks sold will also be donated to the centre. On the opening night (Saturday 22 January from 6:00pm-8:00pm), light refreshments (vegetarian) and wine will be provided.

Details: Gallery, 228 Illawarra Road, Marrickville NSW; for more information please contact Satu Chad on 0422 689 886 or satu.chad@gmail.com

Thursday 3 February – Brisbane

Trapped: An exhibition of artwork by refugees from Burma

Footsteps from Burma and the Karen Community of Brisbane are holding an exhibition to raise awareness of the Karen people.

Details: 6.00pm-8.30pm; Martin Galleries, 4 Aspinall Street in Nundah; RSVP to jmedia@bigpond.net.au

From Friday 4 February to Sunday 13 February – Sydney

Gaden Shartse Tibetan monks visit Roseville

Tibetan monks from the Gaden Shartse Monastery in India will pay a special visit to Roseville for 10 days in February. The Centre of Wellness, in collaboration with Sierra Friends of Tibet and Tibetech.org, will host the monks who come from the original Buddhist monastery of the Gelug tradition of Tibet. The Gelug, also known as "Yellow Hats", is the order of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The public is invited to attend and observe the monks or participate in some of the ceremonies.

Details: participation is free, but donations are suggested, with all donations going to the non-profit Gaden Shartse Cultural Foundation; the Children's Art Centre, 190 Park Drive (inside Royer Park off Douglas Boulevard), Roseville; for a complete schedule of events, visit www.thecenterofwellness.net

Monday 7 February – Melbourne

Seeds for Growth Fund Information session

The Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre Seeds for Growth Fund provides small amounts of funding to strengthen migrant and refugee communities in Melbourne's north and west regions. This information session will provide details to help you develop your grant idea, learn how to write your application and improve your ability to report back on how you spent your grant.

Details: 6:00pm; 251 High Street, Preston VIC; RSVP to Carlene Lamanna, Community Engagement Facilitator, on (03) 9496 0250 or community@spectrumvic.org.au

From Tuesday 8 February to Sunday 27 February – Sydney

Shen Yun Performing Arts fundraiser for the Edmund Rice Centre

Shen Yun Performing Arts presents exhilarating performances of classical Chinese dance and music. Shen Yun features hundreds of spectacular costumes, animated backdrops and a unique orchestral fusion of Eastern and Western traditions giving life to China's dynasties, regions, and ethnic groups. For a limited time, Universal Cultural Communications (UCC), co-presenter of Shen Yun Performing Arts in Australia, will donate 10% of the price of every ticket bought in their name to the Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) for a limited time.

Details: tickets from \$60; Capitol Theatre, Sydney; for further details and to book tickets visit www.divineshows.com/ecard/charity/ER-JAN27/ER27012011.htm; to ensure that the 10% donation is credited to the Edmund Rice Centre, please forward your receipt (with order number, seat number and ticket amount) to Grace at intouch@erc.org.au

Tuesday 8 February – Sydney

Conflict, violence and humanitarian responses in 2011: the ICRC perspective

The Lowy Institute is hosting a presentation by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC's) Director of Operations, Mr Pierre Krahenbuhl. He will discuss recent trends in integrated missions, the militarisation of aid, how the increasingly complex coordination challenges are impacting on the international community's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance and how we might help build greater community resilience to conflict.

Details: 12:30pm for 12:45pm start until 1:45pm; The Lowy Institute for International Policy, Ground floor, 31 Bligh Street, Sydney; RSVP before 5:00pm on Friday, 4 February to Kate Weston at kweston@lowyinstitute.org

Saturday 12 February – Brisbane

2011 Lunar New Year and Lantern Festival

This event, hosted by the Taiwan Friendship Association of Queensland and the Hakka Association of Queensland will feature rides, stalls, dance and musical performances, talent shows, tae kwon do and swordplay demonstrations, competitions, zumba and a charity auction to support the Queensland Flood Relief Appeal.

Details: free entry; 10:00am-6:00pm; Macgregor State (Primary) School Sport Oval, McCullough Street, Macgregor QLD; for further details, contact Anthony Lin on 0412 745 999 or tfaq_qld@yahoo.com.au; for information about stall registration, contact Shan Ju Lin on 0410 567 618 or shanju88@gmail.com.

Wednesday 16 February – Sydney

Forum: Should Australian Keep Growing? Sustainability, Immigration and Multiculturalism

This forum, hosted by the University of Western Sydney, will include presentations by Professor Andrew Jakubowicz, Dr Tanveer Ahmed and Sandra Kanck.

Details: 5:30pm – 8:00pm; UWS Parramatta Campus, Building EA Room G.19; RSVP online at www.uws.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/activities_and_programs/rsvp or phone (02) 9678 7374. For further details phone (02) 9678 7378 or e-mail d.mey@uws.edu.au

From Thursday 17 February (opening night) to Saturday 5 March – Sydney

Subtext: Art for Literacy

This exhibition, presented by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF), brings together prominent Australian artists and a group of teenagers from Lurnea High School. It explores the power of language and self expression through the lens of young refugees' experience. The centrepiece of the exhibition is an impressive 25m long canvas revealing a collaborative work by political artist, Locust Jones, and 21 teenage students from East Turkistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Sudan, Argentina and Thailand who participated in ALNF's Refugee Action Support program at Lurnea High School. The exhibition will also raise funds for the RAS program through the sale of specially created and one-of-a-kind artworks by 17 well-known Australian artists including Jon Campbell, Simryn Gill, Michael Lindeman, Noel McKenna and Nell. The exhibition will also showcase artworks by Will Coles, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Astra Howard, Rob McHaffie, Mystery, Michelle Nikou, Tom Polo, Charlie Sofo, Arlene Textaqueen, Jake Walker and John Warwicker.

Details: opening night Thursday 17 February from 6:00pm to 9:00pm; exhibition open to the public from Friday 18 February to 5 March, Monday to Saturday. For further details, contact Gabrielle Kemeny on (02) 9362 3388 or through eric.brace@alnf.org, or visit www.carriageworks.com.au/?page=Event&event=Subtext-Art-for-Literacy

Thursday 24 February – Melbourne

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) Professional Development Seminar 1: Getting it Right Aiming for Best Practice in Leadership Programs

This first MCWH Seminar for 2011 is an opportunity to share experiences and strategies in the development of leadership capacity-building programs for immigrant and refugee women. The seminar will highlight the significance of cultural competency in the delivery of effective leadership programs for immigrant and refugee women.

Details: MCWH; Suite 207, level 2 Carringbush Building, 134 Cambridge Street, Collingwood; \$65 per person (includes lunch); RSVP by 18 February to (03) 9418 0999 or training@mcwh.com.au

Wednesday 2 March – Canberra

Missing Peace Sri Lanka Photographic Exhibition

Missing Peace is a charity photographic exhibition that goes behind tourist facades and security fences to reveal the ground realities of post war Sri Lanka. The exhibition features recent photographs taken from Mullaitivu to Mannar and tells a complex story from multiple perspectives – survivors, soldiers, expatriates and aid agencies. It portrays a resilient people searching for diaspora support to piece together their broken lives after the war.

Details: Opening night in Canberra from 6.00pm-9.00pm; the ACT Legislative Assembly, Civic Square, London Circuit; for more information go to www.blog.diasporalanka.com, diasporalanka@gmail.com or 0403 694 132

Thursday 3 March – Melbourne

Vision In Action: Creative Community Responses to War

An evening of conversations and performance celebrating the creative human rights initiatives of Victorian refugee and migrant community groups in places of conflict. Victorians of refugee and migrant backgrounds will share their experiences and display the work they do to promote peace in their home countries. The event is organised by the Humanitarian Crisis Hub. The moderator will be Dr Helen Szoke, Commissioner of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, panellists include: Akoch Acuei Manhiem, Director of the Sudanese Lost Boys Association of Australia, Chris Roche, Director of Development Effectiveness, Oxfam Australia and Denise Cauchi, Director of the Humanitarian Crisis Hub.

Details: 5.30pm for 6.00pm start; BMW Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne; to register go to crisishub.org.au/vision-in-action

Friday 11 March – Melbourne

Melbourne Food & Wine Festival featuring AMES Social Enterprises, the Sorghum Sisters and Cultural Cooks

Following the success of the 2010 Suez to Sumatra dinner, the journey now continues. In 2011, Cultural Cooks and Sorghum Sisters will combine to provide a feast of cultural and ancestral cuisines drawn from countries visited by Marco Polo, including China, Turkey, Iran and Croatia. Guests will experience a 6-course tasting menu from east to west, along the ancient silk routes, while experiencing a variety of ethnic entertainment. The event is presented by AMES Social Enterprises and hosted by restaurateur Dur-e' Dara, with all dishes prepared and served by Enterprise graduates.

Details: 7:00pm; Maia, Docklands, \$145 including 6-course tasting menu and all drinks, with wine supplied by Caledonia Australis. For more information contact Carly Wallman: (03) 9938 4772 or events@ames.net.au

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Lowy Institute report on boat arrivals

This new report, entitled *Responding to Boat Arrivals in Australia: Time for a Reality Check*, aims to provide an objective analysis of recent policy developments on boat arrivals. The report indicates that Australia is not undergoing an asylum crisis of the sort that warrants such an intensity of policy attention and that none of the policies currently being proposed address the root causes of the problem, and are therefore likely only to be short-term fixes or may not even succeed in reducing boat arrivals to Australia. The report paper recommends that the Government avoid enacting more border enforcement and instead pay more attention to the other elements of a comprehensive approach to the challenge of boat arrivals. The report can be downloaded at www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1477. An opinion piece by the author, Khalid Koser, can be read here: www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/time-to-rock-the-boat-on-refugees-20101212-18tvk.html

Australian Human Rights Commission report on Darwin Immigration detention facilities

The Australian Human Rights Commission released its report on immigration detention facilities in Darwin in December 2010. The report raised concerns about the physical conditions of detention in some facilities, the provision of health services (including mental health services) and access to education for children, as well as access to recreation and excursion. The report called for an end to mandatory detention and recommended that the Australian Government stop using the Asti Motel in Darwin as an 'alternative place of detention' as soon as possible. The full report can be read at: www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/idc2010_darwin.html

Radio broadcast on Afghan asylum seekers

This broadcast by ABC Radio National discusses the Memorandum of Understanding between Australia, Afghanistan and UNHCR facilitating the involuntary repatriation of failed Afghan asylum seekers. It includes interviews with RCOA board member Professor William Maley and former Afghan refugee Younis Noori. The broadcast can be downloaded from www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2011/3115085.htm

Immigration Nation documentary and interactive website goes live

The screening of *Immigration Nation: the Secret History of Us* began on January 9th. An interactive website, *Immigration Nation: Building Multicultural Australia*, is also now live at www.sbs.com.au/immigrationnation/interactive. With around 80 videos and 50 support stories, it is a content rich, entertaining and informative website.

Report on the experiences of African refugees in obtaining secure housing

This report by Anglicare Sydney, entitled *Long way home? The plight of African refugees obtaining decent housing in Western Sydney*, explores the experience of African refugees in obtaining secure and long term housing in central Western Sydney. It finds that African refugees in Western Sydney face significant housing insecurity years after arriving in Australia and are trapped in welfare dependency. It calls on the State and Federal Governments to: significantly increase funding for new public housing across Australia; extend the length of time that humanitarian entrants can receive settlement assistance; and simplify entry pathways into public and private housing system, especially for non-English speakers. The report can be downloaded at www.anglicare.org.au/download.cfm?f=BEA703C6-ADDB-9B32-ED38D1AE97A31D04

Information sheet on working with newly arrived young people at risk of homelessness

This information sheet, published by the Centre for Multicultural Youth, provides guidance for housing and homelessness sector workers about how to work effectively with newly arrived young people and with the multicultural sector, as well as for settlement sector workers about how to work with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and with the housing and homelessness sector. The sheet can be downloaded from:

www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1593/1/Workingwithnewly-arrivedyoungpeoplewhoarehomelessoratriskofhomelessness.pdf

Diabetes Victoria's Cultural Diversity Program

Many people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia experience a high incidence of diabetes and an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Diabetes Victoria's Cultural Diversity Program focuses on addressing diabetes issues amongst multicultural populations. This website aims to provide people from multicultural communities with information that will assist them to understand the risks associated with developing diabetes and equip them with resources to help manage diabetes. It includes downloadable booklets about diabetes in Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Spanish, Turkish, Vietnamese and English, as well as information about diabetes awareness sessions for multicultural communities. The site also provides information about the organisation's Multilingual Infoline Service, which allows those with limited English proficiency to speak with a diabetes educator using an interpreter. The site URL is:

www.diabetesvic.org.au/diabetes-prevention/prevention-programs/cultural-diversity-program

Health service delivery for newly arrived refugee children: a framework for good practice

An article regarding the proposal of a framework for good practice to promote improved access, equity and quality of care in service delivery for newly arrived refugee children by Lisa Woodland, David Burgner, Georgia Paxton and Karen Zwi is available for viewing at this website: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1440-1754.2010.01796.x/pdf

Gambling brochure in Burmese and Sgaw Karen

The Multicultural Gambler's Help Program run by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH) has been working with communities from Burma on a new brochure on gambling and problem gambling. The brochure is available in Burmese and Sgaw Karen, with English translations, on the CEH website: www.ceh.org.au/mghp/problem_gambling_resources/multilingual_brochures_gamblers.aspx

MYAN website launch

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) has launched a new website, www.myan.org.au. The website includes a list of partner organisations that are currently involved in the network, policy documents, and contact details for each state representative. The site will be featuring more content in the future, including details of upcoming MYAN-related events.

Refugee Law and Policy Group website launch

The Refugee Law and Policy Group in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales has launched a new website, www.law.unsw.edu.au/centres/rllpg, providing an overview of the Faculty's wide range of research activities and clinical programs in refugee and migration law, as well as links to publications.

New UNHCR eligibility guidelines on Afghanistan

In December 2010, UNHCR published its latest Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan. UNHCR reports that the guidelines are issued against a backdrop of a worsening security situation in certain parts of Afghanistan and sustained conflict-related human rights violations. The guidelines indicate that persons associated with the Afghan Government or the international community, journalists and other media professionals covering issues considered as sensitive, women and girls, children and religious, ethnic and sexual minorities remain at risk of persecution warranting international protection. The guidelines can be viewed at www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html

New report on the issue of immigration detention at the UN level

The International Detention Coalition has published a new report on developments at the UN level on the issue of immigration detention. The report indicates that developments at the UN level over the last 18 months suggest there is growing international recognition among UN agencies of the issue of immigration detention, particularly the detention of children, and the importance of exploring and promoting alternatives to immigration detention. The report can be downloaded at idcoalition.org/idc-report-the-issue-of-immigration-detention-at-the-un-level

UNHCR Protection Policy Paper on maritime interception operations and extraterritorial processing

This paper outlines UNHCR's views on extraterritorial processing of claims for international protection made by persons who are intercepted at sea. It provides an overview of the applicable standards under international human rights and refugee law as well as key policy parameters relating to four models for extraterritorial processing, from the perspective of UNHCR. The paper can be downloaded at www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cd12d3a2.html

UNHCR working paper on repatriation of Southern Sudanese in Uganda

Lucy Hovil, Senior Researcher at the International Refugee Rights Initiative, has written UNHCR's latest working paper on the process of repatriation of Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda. While the official repatriation process continues, the paper demonstrates that refugees are creating their own durable solutions through a combination of economic and social integration and ongoing movement in and out of Sudan. The paper explores both the process of official repatriation and the practical survival strategies and how to create better resonance between the two. The paper can be downloaded at: www.unhcr.org/4cf5018b1.pdf

Reports on minority rights in Somalia and Sri Lanka

Two new reports published by Minority Rights Group International by minority groups in two of the world's major refugee-producing countries. *No redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities* examines the neglected situation of minority groups in Somalia: <http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=912>. *No war, no peace: the denial of minority rights and justice in Sri Lanka* examines the harsh material conditions, economic marginalisation, and militarism faced by Sri Lanka's two main minority groups – Tamils and Muslims – living in the north and east of the country in the wake of the civil war: <http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=921>

Latest edition of Forced Migration Review on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The latest edition of Forced Migration Review focuses on the theme *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Past. Present. Future?* Contributors include representatives from Congolese civil society, UN agencies and NGOs, Congolese and donor governments, and international researchers. The full publication, which is also available as a PDF and audio file, can be read online at www.fmreview.org/DR Congo

Policy briefing on protracted refugee situations

This new policy briefing from the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford examines the nature and scope of protracted displacement, some of its causes and consequences, and a short history of international responses to protracted refugee situations before examining in detail the process leading to the 2009 ExCom Conclusion on Protracted Refugee Situations and the steps required by states, UNHCR and NGOs to adequately respond to these situations in the future. The briefing can be downloaded at www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/RSCP6-RespondingToProtractedRefugeeSituations.pdf

ACT Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Research Project

This joint project between the Australian National University and the ACT Government assessed whether the *ACT Human Rights Act 2004* should be amended to include economic, social and cultural rights. The overall conclusion of the project report was that the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights guarantees in the ACT's Human Rights Act is desirable and feasible, and that the Act should be amended to include most of the rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report can be downloaded at acthra.anu.edu.au/PESCR/Final%20report/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20ACT%20ESCR%20Research%20Project_9%20December%202010.pdf

2010 Human Rights Oration with David Marr

The 2010 Human Rights Oration, held on 10 December, was delivered by journalist, author, and political and social commentator David Marr, who proposed that making headway on rights requires us to ask, "what is it about our history, politics and press that gives the enemies of human rights such traction in Australia?" To read or listen to the oration, visit humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/oration

Launch of The International Network

The International Network (TIN) is a think tank-style, professional and social platform which seeks to connect not-for-profit organisations, supporters and the general public with an interest in promoting human rights, the rule of law, democracy and freedom as well as environmental issues and capacity building. TIN aims to enable members to meet like-minded people, network, find collaborators, exchange ideas and participate in discussions. Membership is free. For further information, visit www.theinonline.net

Foolkit, the free legal toolkit

Foolkit is the largest free legal information website in Australia based on the number and variety of resources. It aims to provide access to a range of legal resources to lawyers and the public. Foolkit can be accessed at www.foolkit.com.au

2011 Refugee Calendar from Global Backyard

Global Backyard is a community initiative aiming to provide support and resources to refugee communities living in Sydney in their personal, professional and academic development. The 2011 Global Backyard calendar is a collection of inspiring stories of the remarkable people that have come from around the world as refugees and now live in Sydney. Calendars can be purchased through www.globalbackyard.com.au

OPPORTUNITIES

Australian Red Cross Community Detention Program Expansion – call for Expressions of Interest

The Red Cross has agreed to act as a lead agency in the expansion of community care arrangements for families and unaccompanied minors following the Prime Minister and Minister for Immigration and Citizenship's announcement that community detention options would be expanded for these groups. Red Cross will sub-contract welfare and community organisations to deliver care for people in community detention, including accommodation, out-of-home care, casework support, and recreational and skill based activities. The Red Cross is seeking Expressions of Interest from organisations to provide some or all of the above listed services. EOIs must be received by 14 January 2011. EOIs received after 14 Jan will be considered as the program rolls out. Further information and documentation is available at: www.redcross.org.au/community_detention_expansion

Karen Homework Support Program in Sydney

Volunteers are needed to spend a maximum two hours per week with a group of high school students originally from Thai-Burma border refugee camps. They have settled in Sydney over the past two to three years under the humanitarian program and need support with their homework. The group meets once a week on Monday, after school hours (4:00pm-6:00pm), at Woodville Community Centre, Villawood. Volunteer tutors are asked to commit to the group once a week for the school year (term time only). If you are interested in becoming a volunteer tutor, please contact the Karen Settlement Grant Program Worker, Victor Saw, at karensgrp@thhpmrc.org.au or (02) 9687 9901.

Volunteer with young refugees in the Ucan2 program (Melbourne)

The Centre for Multicultural Youth is seeking volunteers to support its Ucan2 program, which aims to increase the social, education, training, and employment opportunities for young people from refugee backgrounds during their first fifteen months of resettlement in Australia. Volunteers are sought for programs based in South East and Western regions of Melbourne, starting February 2011 until June 2011. You must be over 18, interested in learning about different cultures, want to make a difference in a young person's life, proactive, enthusiastic and fun and able to commit to two hours, one afternoon a week for six months. Contact the Ucan2 project officer on (03) 9340 3700 or email ucan2@cmymy.net.au, or go to www.cmy.net.au

Applications now open for Spectrum Seeds for Growth Fund

The Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre Seeds for Growth Fund provides small amounts of funding to strengthen migrant and refugee communities in Melbourne's north and west regions. The first funding round for 2011 is now open for applications. For further details including assistance with applications, please contact Carlene Lamanna, Community Engagement Facilitator, on (03) 9496 0250 or community@spectrumvic.org.au, or visit www.spectrumvic.org.au/Communities. Applications close Tuesday 1 March.

Call for Papers: Special Issue on Iraqi refugees

Canadian periodical, *Refuge*, will publish a special issue on Iraqi Refugees in its Summer 2011 issue. Submissions are needed that address a broad range of topics related to Iraqi refugees post the 2003 war in Iraq. Submissions may include critical perspectives on: the humanitarian, legal and policy responses of the international community, of the government in Iraq and host states in the Middle East, and of resettlement and asylum countries in Europe, North America and the Pacific; the political economy of humanitarian aid; the intervention models used by humanitarian actors to manage and provide assistance and information to the refugees; livelihoods of refugees in host countries in the Middle East; psycho-social and gendered aspects of the refugee experience; refugees' social networks; transnationalism and migration patterns between the Middle East and distant asylum countries and challenges associated with third-country resettlement. Editors are particularly interested in papers based on in-depth field research yet theoretically grounded that can contribute to the debate on urban refugees yet will highlight the specificity of the Iraqi refugee situation and may also show the limits of the urban refugee approach. Contributions must be received by March 31, 2011. Length can be up to 7500 words. See *Refuge's* website for author guidelines:

pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/refuge/about/submissions#authorGuidelines

Contributors sought for research on migrant and refugee settlement in regional Victoria

The Municipal Association of Victoria has partnered with the University of Melbourne and the Victorian Multicultural Commission for a research project on "Resettling Visible Migrants and Refugees in Rural and Regional Australia". The project will document and assess the resettlement experiences of recently-arrived migrants and refugees by exploring their sense of identity and belonging; their patterns of employment; the ways that host communities respond and adapt to them; and the effectiveness of regional resettlement and other policies at federal, state and local government levels. The research is currently conducting in-depth interviews with recently-arrived migrants and refugees about their settlement experiences, across eight local government areas: Ballarat, Colac-Otway, Geelong, Latrobe, Maribyrnong, Monash, Mt Alexander and Swan Hill. If you know someone who would be interested to participate in an interview, please contact the project at <mailto:VMR-Project@unimelb.edu.au> or phone (03) 9035 4227.

ARC Laureate Fellowship post-doctoral position

Applications are sought from suitably qualified scholars for the position of Postdoctoral Fellow (Level A) to work on Professor Hilary Charlesworth's ARC Laureate Fellowship project, *Strengthening the International Human Rights System: Rights, Ritualism and Regulation*. This three-year fixed term position is based at the Centre for International Governance and Justice in the Regulatory Institutions Network in the College of Asia and the Pacific at ANU. Enquiries to Professor Hilary Charlesworth, hilary.charlesworth@anu.edu.au or (02) 6125 6040. Applications close on 13 February 2011.

Two Macquarie University scholarships available to carry out PhD research in the field of Migration, Multiculturalism and Nation

Associate Professor Ellie Vasta at the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (CRSI) is seeking two outstanding doctoral candidates to conduct PhD research commencing in semester 1 or 2, 2011. The deadline for the 2 scholarships is 21 February 2011. The two doctoral projects will focus on a) changes in identity, belonging, solidarity and the politics of sharing, in relation to migration and diversity in Australia b) African youth in Australia, with relation to social participation, identity and sense of belonging in transnational context. For more information go to:

www.hdr.mq.edu.au/information_about/scholarships/hdr_scholarships_domestic_candidates_only

Cricket Australia Multicultural Talent and Leadership Program

Cricket Australia is on a quest to find Australia's most talented multicultural cricketers. The Multicultural Talent and Leadership Program will provide an elite player performance environment to participants

from various ethnic backgrounds to gain further cricket experience both on and off the field. All participants must be aged between 17 and 22 on July 1, 2012. For more information go to, www.cricket.com.au/MTLP

Nansen Refugee Award – call for nominations

The Nansen Refugee Award recognises extraordinary and dedicated service to refugees and is the most prestigious honour referred by UNHCR. The Award is named after the late Norwegian polar explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, who was the first League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 2011 UNHCR will celebrate Fridtjof Nansen's 150th birthday. Nansen worked tirelessly on behalf of refugees and in 1922 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his critical work. Candidates for the award should be inspiring, committed individuals, groups or organisations involved in work supporting the cause of refugees, forcibly displaced or stateless people, or contributing to the wellbeing and improved conditions for people of concern to UNHCR. The deadline for submission of nominations for the 2011 Nansen Refugee Award is 28 February 2011. Nominations and requests for information should be addressed to the Nansen Committee Secretariat, UNHCR, Case Postale 2500, CH-1211, Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland, email: nansen@unhcr.org

Australian Refugee Film Festival 2011 Call for Submissions

Submissions are free and open to both Australian and International films up to 10-15 minutes in duration. Films addressing the following issues are welcome: environmental displacement due to climate change; the refugee journey and the obstacles associated with it; personal triumph stories of refugees and asylum seekers; and documented work of local and international organisations with refugees and asylum seekers. The deadline is 31 March 2011. Visit www.australianrefugeefilmfestival.org for more information.

2011 Clean Up Australia Day

Clean Up Australia invites refugee and migrant communities to get involved in Australia's largest community driven environmental event, Clean Up Australia Day. Every year hundreds of thousands of Australians get stuck in and clean up their local environment by collecting and removing rubbish on Clean Up Australia Day. Last year, one in fifty Australians took part – totalling 588,000 volunteers. Together, they connected more than one hundred thousand bags of rubbish at 7,073 registered sites across Australia. In 2011, Clean Up Australia Day will be held on Sunday 6 March. For information on how to get involved, go to www.cleanupaaustralia.org.au or call 1800 282 329

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

A busy person's digest of some recent media coverage of refugee issues:

(Inclusion in this summary does not imply that RCOA agrees with the article's content or vouches for its accuracy)

Use of biometric data for onshore protection applications

The Department of Immigration will begin collecting biometric information from all onshore paper-based visa applicants seeking refugee status, in addition to the biometric information already collected from offshore applicants. The data, including digital facial images and 10-digit fingerprint scans, will be collected from applicants in 16 high-risk countries, with seven more countries to be added in later months. Federal Immigration Minister Chris Bowen stated it would reduce identity fraud and fraudulent claims. (AAP, 1 December 2010)

www.smh.com.au/technology/security/crackdown-on-fraudulent-visa-applications-with-biometric-data-20101201-18g4s.html

Immigration Investigates Christmas Island brawl

The Department of Immigration has commenced an enquiry into a brawl involving up to 100 people at the Christmas Island detention centre. The Department has also confirmed that the spy agency ASIO has issued adverse security rulings on two Sri Lankan men in detention on the island. The security rulings mean they are banned from entering Australia. (ABC News, 2 December 2010)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/12/02/3082448.htm

Red Cross acts on detainees in Australia

The Red Cross is leading an effort to transition families out of Australian immigration detention centres and into the community by December 25. This move is in response to the Federal Government's October announcement that it would move several hundred children and families into community-based

accommodation for the sake of their development and mental health. (ABC Asia Pacific News, 6 December 2010) australianetworknews.com/stories/201012/3085287.htm?desktop

Afghans dominate Australian asylum arrivals

Nearly half the asylum seekers who arrived by boat this year came from Afghanistan, according to the Federal Government. More than 6,100 people have arrived so far this year and a recent increase in boat arrivals means nearly 6,000 people are now being held by immigration authorities in Australia. (ABC Asia Pacific News, 6 December 2010)

australianetworknews.com/stories/201012/3085778.htm?desktop

Detention erodes mental health: McGorry

Mental health expert Patrick McGorry says Australia must find better ways to deal with detainees at immigration detention centres. McGorry's comments follow the death of a third inmate at Sydney's Villawood detention centre. (AAP, 8 December 2010)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/detention-erodes-mental-health-mcgorry-20101208-18peg.html

Self-harm in detention centres on rise

The Immigration Department is experiencing an increase in self-harm cases and violent incidents at detention centres. The Department commissioned the University of NSW to review the international research on resolving immigration status only to then sit on the report. The report concluded that mandatory detention "has a negative impact on both the physical and the mental health of a population that is already vulnerable. A spokesman for Immigration Minister Chris Bowen said the government wanted the majority of vulnerable families and children in community-based accommodation, and had sought to improve the culture in detention centres. (The Australian, 9 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/self-harm-in-detention-centres-on-rise/story-e6frg6nf-1225967906031

Detainees waiting too long for processing: Amnesty

Amnesty International has reported that detainees in Darwin are waiting far too long to find out if their asylum applications have been approved. The Immigration Department has said the average length of time it takes to assess asylum applications is 160 days, but Dr Thom from Amnesty International says that is not the reality for many people. (ABC News Online, 11 December 2010)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/12/11/3090891.htm?section=justin

Afghan detainees to be sent home

The Federal Government has finalised an agreement to send failed Afghan asylum seekers home. This memorandum of understanding has been created between Australia, Afghanistan and the United Nations and is anticipated to be signed off next week. (The Australian, 14 December 2010)

www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad-application/afghan-detainees-to-be-sent-home/story-fn6bfmgc-1225970593767

Asylum policy too narrow: Lowy Institute paper

A Lowy Institute report has found that key planks of the federal government's asylum seeker policies are too narrow and will fail to stop the boats arriving. (AAP, 14 December 2010)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/asylum-policy-too-narrow-lowy-inst-paper-20101214-18w99.html

At least 27 asylum seekers die as boat sinks off Australia

A wooden boat carrying about 70 asylum seekers smashed against jagged rocks in a storm off Christmas Island, flinging terrified occupants into churning waters and killing at least 27 people. (AP, 15 December 2010)

www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hvL1EpTUL57t-KVu1Fy4HACccRvw?docId=44589733d82e49e5aad40405c589c152

Up to 100 onboard wrecked asylum seeker boat says Chris Bowen

The Federal Government says up to 100 people could have been aboard the boat that smashed on to rocks at Christmas Island. At least 28 people, including children have died and there are 44 confirmed survivors - 11 of those rescued are children. It had yet to be determined whether the boat had been tracked from Indonesia before its arrival at Christmas Island. (AAP, 16 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/possibly-up-to-100-onboard-destroyed-asylum-seeker-boat-says-chris-bowen/story-fn3dxity-1225971913505

Sea scoured for victims after asylum shipwreck

Australian rescue crews are preparing to resume the search for victims of the Christmas Island shipwreck. A temporary mortuary has been set up on the island and the bodies of the dead will be taken to Western Australia, where the state coroner will hold an inquiry. Refugee advocates are demanding a public inquiry into how so many lives were lost in this tragedy. (ABC Asia Pacific News Centre, 16 December 2010)

australianetworknews.com/stories/201012/3094482.htm?desktop

Sri Lankan group in legal limbo

The Federal Government is facing another immigration crisis over a failed promise made to a group of Sri Lankan refugees from the Oceanic Viking who were sent to an emergency transit centre in Romania for resettlement in third countries. They are refusing to return to Australia because they face detention on Christmas Island, where facilities are notoriously overcrowded. They cannot be returned to Sri Lanka as they have been determined to be genuine refugees. It is understood a team of negotiators headed by Paris Aristotle, the director of the Foundation for Victims of Torture, has flown to Romania to persuade them to return to Australia. (Sydney Morning Herald, 17 December 2010)

www.smh.com.au/world/sri-lankan-group-in-legal-limbo-20101216-18zmy.html

Three probes begin into sinking

Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that three investigations are under way into the Christmas Island tragedy. Ms Gillard has also invited the Opposition, the Greens and the independent MPs to form a standing group to receive reports from the government agencies involved, including Defence, Customs, the Australian Federal Police and the Immigration Department. (Australian, 17 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/three-probes-begin-into-sinking/story-fn59niix-1225972403683

Christmas Island toll climbs to 30

At least 30 people, including 4 infants, have perished in the Christmas Island boat sinking. Some of the 9 surviving children owe their lives to the quick thinking of Christmas Islanders, whose improvised rescue efforts saved lives. The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, hailed the heroic actions of locals and navy and Customs officers. (Sydney Morning Herald, 17 December 2010)

www.smh.com.au/national/heroics-and-heartbreak-christmas-island-toll-climbs-to-30-20101217-18zx5.html

Rising tide of boat arrivals

The Department of Immigration released figures showing the proportion of asylum seekers arriving by boat jumped from 16 per cent two years ago to 47 per cent of the asylum seekers last year. The majority of asylum seekers still remains those who arrive by air with a temporary visa and subsequently seek to stay permanently on grounds of persecution if they return to their homeland. (The Age, 17 December 2010) www.theage.com.au/national/rising-tide-of-boat-arrivals-20101216-18zlm.html

Christmas Island tragedy forces review of ALP asylum stance

Labor Party National President Anna Bligh has backed a complete review of the government's border protection policies. The call comes as the Opposition said it would not join a proposed bipartisan group to review the Christmas Island tragedy. The Prime Minister warned the death toll, currently at 30 people, would almost certainly rise because up to 100 Iraqis, Iranians and Kurds were believed to have been aboard the boat. (Australian, 17 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/chritmas-island-tragedy-forces-review-of-alps-asylum-stance/story-fn59niix-1225972457596

ALP urged to be more humane on asylum-seekers

Cameron Milner, a former Queensland Labor Party secretary from the party's Right, has echoed Anna Bligh's recent call for an overhaul of refugee policy, arguing that the Christmas Island tragedy highlights the need for a more humanitarian approach. Mr Milner said Australia could virtually end people-smuggling by resettling more asylum-seekers from troubled nations such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Iraq. (The Australian, 18 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/alp-urged-to-be-more-humane-on-asylum-seekers/story-fn59niix-1225972985871

Survivors pray for 30 lost in Australia refugee wreck

Traumatized survivors of the Christmas Island tragedy held a private vigil behind bars for the 30 people who died in the accident. The 42 people rescued from the sea now face the harrowing task of identifying their loved ones among the dead, now that the search for survivors has been called off. (AFP, 19 December 2010)

Abbott call to return to Howard policy after shipwreck

Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott has used the Christmas Island boat disaster to call for a return to the Howard government's asylum seeker policies. He wants temporary protection visas introduced and the Nauru detention centre reopened and says boats should be turned back where it is safe to do so. (ABC News Online, 19 December 2010)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/12/19/3096984.htm?section=justin

Dili gets outline of Gillard's Timor solution, five months on

The East Timorese Government has received, from the Australian Government, a document outlining the proposal for a regional processing centre there. East Timor's Foreign Minister Zacarias da Costa stated that "I wouldn't say the document has much detail but it has more detail than we had before". "We can at last clarify what Australia has in mind to [East Timor's] cabinet," he said. (The Age, 20 December 2010)

www.theage.com.au/national/dili-gets-outline-of-gillards-timor-solution-five-months-on-20101219-191xd.html

Families in Adelaide Hills homes

Twenty-two asylum seeking families have settled into their new temporary homes at the Inverbrackie detention facility in the Adelaide Hills. Immigration Department spokesman Bill Power said it seemed that the refugees were settling in well to their new environment. (The Advertiser, 20 December 2010)

www.adelaidenow.com.au/there-is-room-at-this-inn/story-e6frea6u-1225973237887

PM: 48 may have died in boat crash off Australia

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has said that, based on the latest information from the Australian Federal Police, it appears about 90 asylum seekers were on the boat that crashed off Christmas Island. Gillard stated that thirty asylum seekers are confirmed dead and another 18 have probably perished, she warned that those still missing may never be found. (AP, 20 December 2010)

www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gRchhFqOTdsnmGLdmuMvpwTy-rbg?docId=79635994956f4fe399db3585ea86399e

Christmas Island orphan now in Immigration Minister's care

Three children have been orphaned by the Christmas Island tragedy, including one who was travelling with no other relatives. The Immigration Minister is now his legal guardian. The Department of Immigration will follow a process of establishing his identity and trying to find his relatives, in Australia or overseas. The children are being looked after by carers, who have been brought to the island to assist in the process. (Australian, 21 December 2010)

www.news.com.au/national/shipwrecked-orphan-in-ministers-care/story-e6frfkvr-1225974216112

PNG protesters warned not to come

A group of Papuans protesting for Australian citizenship have been warned travelling to Australia by boat is dangerous and urged to abandon the plan, the immigration department says. The group want Australia to recognise that Papuans were not given a choice to remain Australians when PNG became independent in 1975. (AAP, 22 December 2010)

www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/png-protesters-warned-not-to-come/story-e6frf7jx-1225975170060

Government urged to end 'war' on refugees

Activists are trying to put pressure on politicians to stop treating the asylum seekers in the Christmas Island tragedy like a "football" and be more sympathetic to their plight. They have also called on the government to allow survivors contact with relatives in Australia and to give the children orphaned in Wednesday's accident citizenship. (AAP, 22 December 2010)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/govt-urged-to-end-war-on-refugees-20101222-195li.html

Family reunion for shipwreck orphans

Three children left orphaned by the Christmas Island boat tragedy have been reunited with aunts and uncles - some of whom arrived on refugee boats just days later. (Daily Telegraph, 23 December 2010)

www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw-act/family-reunion-for-shipwreck-orphans/story-e6freuzi-1225975191070

Greens push for refugee intake of 20,000

The Australian Greens have called for an increase in Australia's annual refugee intake to 20,000, while immigration advocates have called for a total of 25,000. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen's spokesman pointed to Julia Gillard's comments reaffirming that the Federal Government had no plans to increase its annual humanitarian intake. Tony Abbott has again said the Coalition would consider accepting more refugees. (Australian, 23 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/greens-push-for-refugee-intake-of-20000/story-fn59niix-1225975189552

Plan for more refugees rejected

The Coalition has rejected a push by the Greens to boost the country's refugee intake to 20,000 people a year. Opposition immigration spokesman Scott Morrison said the priority should be to discourage people from getting on boats and smashing the people-smuggling business. (Australian, 24 December 2010) www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/plan-for-more-refugees-rejected/story-fn59niix-1225975632943

Amnesty pleads for Tamil asylum seekers left in limbo

Amnesty International, following calls from the Refugee Council of Australia, states that Tamil asylum-seekers given adverse security assessments by ASIO should not be repatriated to Sri Lanka, where they face persecution. Both organisations call for the government to explain whether ASIO's adverse assessments against Tamil asylum-seekers is linked to advice from Sri Lankan military intelligence. (Australian, 31 December 2010)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/amnesty-pleads-for-tamil-asylum-seekers-left-in-limbo/story-e6frg6nf-1225978995626

Concern for Burma refugees forced from Thailand

The United Nations refugee agency is concerned for the welfare of a group of 166 Burmese refugees which was forced back across the Thai-Burma border. Sporadic fighting between Burmese government troops and ethnic rebels has forced many thousands of villagers to seek safety in Thailand. The group had told the UNHCR that they were not ready to return because they were worried about their security and welfare. (ABC, 31 December 2010) www.radioaustralia.net.au/asiapac/stories/201012/s3104607.htm

Asylum boats slow after disaster

Four asylum seeker boats have been collected and taken to Christmas Island in the 19 days since the Christmas Island tragedy, according to figures published by Border Protection Command. The four intercepts represent a slight slowdown compared with the 19 days leading up to the tragedy. Refugee advocate Pamela Curr said the slowdown was clear but the reasons for it were not. (Australian, 3 January 2011)

www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad-application/asylum-boats-slow-after-disaster/story-fn6bfkm6-1225980695730

Immigration Department rejects Brindhya

Brindhya, the little girl who made a televised plea in 2009 to be accepted as a refugee, has been rejected by the Immigration Department. Brindhya and her parents were among the original 254 asylum-seekers onboard the Jaya Lestari cargo boat that set out from Malaysia 14 months ago and was then seized and taken to Merak by the Indonesian navy. Many other people are still waiting for decisions from the Immigration Department. (Australian, 3 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/immigration-department-rejects-brindhya/story-e6frg6nf-1225980642868

FOI documents reveal asylum seeker struggle

The Navy has stopped a boat carrying a group of asylum seekers in waters north-west of Australia. This comes as documents released by the Immigration Department under Freedom of Information laws show the Government is struggling to deal with the growing number of boat arrivals. (ABC News, 5 January 2011) www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/05/3106618.htm?section=justin

X-ray age-check tool inaccurate

A controversial medical technique used by the Australian Federal Police to determine the physical maturity of asylum seekers who claim to be underage, is inaccurate, according to the Immigration Department. The Department noted that "a number" of asylum seekers on Christmas Island have sought to change their date of birth in order to make themselves minors, a status that confers special benefits – such as sponsoring their parents. (Australian, 6 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/x-ray-age-check-tool-inaccurate/story-fn59niix-1225982639574

Gillard clears way for asylum-seeker appeals

The Federal Government has announced changes to its asylum seeker policy in the wake of a High Court decision in November that applicants in detention had the right to have their cases heard in court. Arrangements to streamline the refugee determination process and appeal system have been outlined to cope with the expected pressures on the court system. The new determination process will apply to asylum-seekers who arrive by boat offshore from March 1. (Australian Online, 7 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/attorney-general/rejected-asylum-seekers-win-right-appeal/story-fn59nju7-1225983526098

Pat McGorry attacks 'reprehensible' detention

Pat McGorry has hit out at Labor's immigration policies as "draconian" and "morally reprehensible", maintaining that detention centres are breeding grounds for the mentally ill. He believes the Government needs to "step up and show real leadership" on immigration, mental health and indigenous inequality. (Australian, 10 January 2011)

www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/pat-mcgorry-attacks-reprehensible-detention/story-e6frf716-1225984739490

Immigration Minister dismisses detention concerns

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has hit back at Australian of the Year Patrick McGorry's call for a revamped immigration policy regime, stating that the system of mandatory detention "will not change". Refugee advocates backed McGorry, saying he should be praised for shining the spotlight on difficulties asylum-seekers face in detention. (Australian, 11 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/immigration-minister-dismisses-detention-concerns/story-e6frg6nf-1225985239908

Iraqi asylum-seeker sews lips in protest

An Iraqi asylum-seeker on Christmas Island has sewn his lips together in protest over the processing of his refugee claim. A spokesman from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship said the man is "being offered medical treatment and that the detention service provider and medical staff are monitoring the situation closely." (Australian, 13 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/iraqi-asylum-seeker-sews-lips-in-protest/story-e6frg6nf-1225986608464

Asylum Seekers donate to the flood appeal

A group of around 70 asylum seekers at an immigration detention centre in Darwin have cobbled together what little cash they have to support the victims of Queensland's floods. (SBS, 14 January 2011)

www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1466152/Asylum-seekers-donate-to-flood-appeal

Failed Afghan asylum seekers to go home

A landmark immigration agreement between the Australian and Afghanistan government will allow Afghans declared genuine refugees to stay in Australia but those who fail to meet the criteria can be automatically deported. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen hailed the Memorandum of Understanding with Afghanistan's government as a major breakthrough in tightening the country's borders against people smugglers and non-refugees. However, refugee groups are disappointed with the agreement, saying it could not guarantee the safety of asylum seekers returned to Afghanistan. (The Age, 17 January 2011)

news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/failed-afghan-asylum-seekers-to-go-home-20110117-19tv4.html

Bid to free detained Afghan youths

The High Court will be asked tomorrow to release four Afghan asylum seekers who arrived on Christmas Island as unaccompanied minors, pending the outcome of a legal challenge to their detention. Refugee advocates believe the case will highlight the difference between the Gillard government's policy commitments supporting the release of children from detention and the reality of inaction since a policy shift was announced last October. (The Age, 18 January 2011)

www.theage.com.au/national/bid-to-free-detained-afghan-youths-20110117-19u1k.html

Curtin hunger strike in response to MoU

A lone detainee at Curtin began the protest regarding the MoU between the Australian and Afghanistan government on Monday morning by sitting in a roadway in the compound and later cutting himself with a razor. By Monday night about 50 detainees had joined him and the Immigration Department confirmed yesterday that the group had grown to about 150. According to Sayeed Aris Hasheem of the United Hazaras Association, "people are very upset because they have been waiting a long time and now they hear about this new agreement to send them home," he said. An Immigration Department spokeswoman said yesterday's protest was peaceful. Within the group of up to 150, it was only a group

of between 30 and 40 who had declared they were starving themselves. (The Australian, 19 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/detainees-quick-to-join-curtin-hunger-strike/story-fn59niix-1225990609187

Court refuses to free young Afghan detainees

Four young Afghans will remain in detention, despite the Federal Government conceding that their mental health has deteriorated significantly while in custody and that they could be accommodated by a church group in Albert Park. High Court judge Susan Crennan refused to grant an injunction for the release of the four, pending the outcome of a legal challenge to their detention on Christmas Island and in Melbourne. No date has been set for a full bench hearing of the legal challenge, it may not start before April. (The Age, 20 January 2011)

www.theage.com.au/victoria/court-refuses-to-free-young-afghan-detainees-20110119-19woh.html

Reckless plan for Afghans will cost lives

RCOA board member Professor William Maley examines the memorandum of understanding signed between Australia and Afghanistan, providing for the involuntary return to Afghanistan of Afghan asylum seekers "judged not to be in need of international protection". He notes that the memorandum offers very little to guarantee the integrity of the process by which it would be judged whether an asylum applicant needed protection or not. (The Age, 20 January 2011)

www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/reckless-plan-for-afghans-will-cost-lives-20110119-19wle.html

Government accepts Curtin detainees lack information

The Immigration Department says it recognises detainees at Curtin Detention Centre need more information about their asylum claims. Detainees ended a hunger strike yesterday after complaining that their applications were taking too long to process. A spokeswoman for the department says a team will visit the centre in the coming weeks to conduct an information session for the asylum seekers, and that the strike will have no impact on how quickly the detainees' applications are processed or their outcome. (ABC Online, 21 January 2011)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/21/3118084.htm?section=justin

Slow start to asylum seeker relocation

The Australian Red Cross, the lead agency in the relocation dozens of people from detention centres to community accommodation, says a program relocating asylum seekers in the community has had a slow start. Representatives from Perth charities have met Immigration department officials to discuss the plan. (ABC Online, 21 January 2011)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/21/3118145.htm?section=justin

East Timor says it straight: no to asylum centre

East Timor's Deputy Prime Minister Mr Jose Luis Guterres has rejected in the strongest terms yet Julia Gillard's plan for an asylum-seeker processing centre in Dili, saying it is not welcome and should be built in Australia. Speaking in New York where he was attending a UN meeting, Mr Guterres said. "Perhaps it would be better to do so in another place instead of Timor-Leste," he said. "Why not in Australia itself, which has an immense territory and available resources?" (Australian, 24 January 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/east-timor-says-it-straight-no-to-asylum-centre/story-e6fgr6nf-1225993303899

Afghan deportation agreement condemned

The plan to automatically deport failed Afghan asylum seekers from Australia has been condemned by a coalition of organisations and prominent experts. Leading Australia-based social-justice group, the Edmund Rice Centre, has produced a statement which says signatories reject the MoU and demands the Australian government address its humanitarian obligations. This statement was signed by 42 organisations, including the Refugee Council of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia. (AAP, 26 January 2011)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/afghan-deportation-agreement-condemned-20110127-1a5kc.html

Human Rights Record goes under the UN magnifying glass

Australia will face a panel of its peers as it lays bare its human rights record as part of the United Nation's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, in Geneva. A full list of questions-on-notice is available online, which are described by Mr Ben Schokman from the NGO Human Rights Law Resource

Centre as 'some of the significant and serious human rights issues that persist in Australia'. Included in the questions, asked by a representative from the Netherlands, was "what concrete measures is Australia taking to minimise the use of immigration detention and to ensure children are no longer detained?" (ABC Net Unleashed, 27 January 2011) www.abc.net.au/unleashed/43268.html

UN wants end to mandatory detention

The United Nations Human Rights Council wants Australia to end mandatory detention for refugees. This suggestion comes off the back of the UPR process in Geneva. Overall fifty countries made 150 recommendations. Australia was praised for its national apology to the stolen generations and its work on a national human rights framework, but has been urged to adopt a human rights act. Australia will respond to the recommendations on Monday. (ABC News Online, 28 January 2011) www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/28/3123678.htm?section=justin

Malaysia unaware of East Timor refugee plan

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's proposal for a regional refugee processing centre in East Timor has been dealt a crippling blow by Malaysia's Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak, who says he has no knowledge of the plan. Mr Najib's comment indicates that Ms Gillard's proposal has failed to make any headway in the region, and follows the recent declaration by East Timor's Deputy Prime Minister, Jose Luis Guterres, that the centre should not be built in the fledgling nation and would be better located in Australia. (Australian, 29 January 2011) www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/malaysia-unaware-of-east-timor-refugee-plan/story-fn59niix-1225996444144

Asylum seeker tries to set himself on fire

Northern Territory police say they were called to Darwin's immigration detention centre to attend to a fire early this morning. A source at the detention centre says a Burmese asylum seeker attempted self-harm by setting himself alight. Police say the man was taken to Royal Darwin Hospital to be treated for smoke inhalation. (ABC News Online, 31 January 2011) www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/31/3125415.htm?section=justin

Deal struck with skipper of asylum seeker boat

The Federal Government has reached a legal settlement with the captain of a Vietnamese fishing boat after it destroyed the vessel he used to bring 53 asylum seekers to Australia in 2003. The confidential settlement ends a long-running court case that has cost the government millions. It comes after three Federal Court judges last year ruled that if the government could not establish a lawful basis for destroying the ship, its captain was entitled to compensation. (The Age, 31 January 2011) www.theage.com.au/national/deal-struck-with-skipper-of-asylum-seeker-boat-20110130-1a9p7.html