



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

4 March 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

RCOA 2011-12 Intake submission released

RCOA's 2010-11 submission on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program is now available for download from our website. The submission brings together community views gathered from consultations involving more than 230 people across Australia's eight states and territories, feedback from key NGO representatives from South-East Asia and South Asia and extensive research drawing on a wide range of national and international sources. It 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. The submission can be downloaded at

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/consultations.html

Expressions of Interest now open for 2011 AUSCO Exchange Program

RCOA is currently seeking expressions of interest from Australian agencies providing settlement services (including post-arrival orientation to newly arrived refugees) to participate in the 2011 Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Exchange Program. This EOI process seeks to identify two Australian agencies and two Guest Trainers from within the selected agencies currently designing and delivering settlement services, including orientation activities for refugees, to participate in a short-term exchange with AUSCO training teams in two priority locations, probably in the Middle East region.

Applications close 5:00pm AEDT Friday 11 March 2011. For further information about the program and details on how to lodge an EOI, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.au/current/ausco.html

Government gets it wrong with more detention centres

RCOA has expressed dismay at the Australian Government's announcement that it will expand immigration detention facilities in Darwin. RCOA believes that the decision to build a new 1500-bed detention centre at Wickham Point and to expand the Darwin Airport Lodge by 400 beds will do nothing to address the underlying problems in Australia's approach to immigration detention. The continued expansion of detention centres is contrary to the Government's own detention policy for using such centres "as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time". It is also at odds with detention policies applied successfully across Europe and North America which see asylum seekers released into community arrangements after identity, health and screening processes. RCOA's media release can be read here: www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2011/110304_Detention.pdf

Complementary Protection Bill offers greater protection for vulnerable people

RCOA has welcomed the introduction of a new Bill designed to improve Australia's processes for protecting non-refugees from persecution and torture. The *Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Bill 2011* would establish a formal administrative process for assessing the claims of persons who do not fit the Refugee Convention's formal definition of a refugee but who would still be at grave risk of persecution, torture or death if returned to their country of origin. It would enable asylum

seekers to apply for protection on the basis that they would suffer “significant harm” if returned to their country of origin. At present, the fate of such people lies solely with the Immigration Minister who can consider the case only after a very lengthy system of applications, refusals and appeals is exhausted. The Bill would replace this lengthy, bureaucratic and arbitrary approach with a more efficient, cost-effective and transparent system.

However, RCOA remains concerned about several aspects of the legislation. Specifically, the threshold requirements for complementary protection are too complex and restrictive, potentially leading to inconsistencies in decision-making and the denial of protection to people who require it; the requirement that a person facing the death penalty must be able to establish that the penalty will be carried out imposes too onerous a burden of proof; and the requirement that a person must face a personal risk, as opposed to a risk faced by the general population, is ambiguous and could result in the denial of protection to people who need it. RCOA recommends that these provisions be amended before the legislation is passed to ensure that Australia upholds human rights treaty obligations. The text of the Bill can be accessed through www.aph.gov.au/bills/index.htm. RCOA’s media release on the Bill can be read at

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2011/110224%20Comp%20Protection.pdf.

RCOA’s 2009 submission on the first draft of the Bill can be read at

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/0909_CP.pdf

RCOA takes concerns to Parliament House

Between March 1 and 3, RCOA coordinated a series of meetings in Parliament House in Canberra to raise issues of concern to RCOA and its member organisations. The meetings, involving eight representatives of RCOA and four member organisations, were held with MPs, Senators and advisers associated with the Labor, Liberal, National and Greens parties and Independents in both Houses of Parliament. Among them were Government and Opposition frontbenchers, committee chairs and key Independents, including Chris Bowen, Kate Lundy, Trish Crossin, Maria Vamvakinou, Julie Bishop, Scott Morrison, Michaelia Cash, Teresa Gambaro, Ian Macdonald, Sarah Hanson-Young, Nick Xenophon and Rob Oakeshott. Matters discussed included: the many impacts of the policy of indefinite mandatory detention for asylum seekers arriving by boat; the serious delays in security clearances for refugees recognised by Australia; the Government’s complementary protection legislation; the very limited level of support for community-based asylum seekers; Australia’s Memorandum of Understanding with Afghanistan on returns; the tentative steps towards an Asia-Pacific regional protection framework; and the impact of the shrill political debate about asylum seekers.

Ombudsman calls for reform on Christmas Island

The Commonwealth Ombudsman released his report on immigration processes on Christmas Island on 2 February. The report expressed concern about a range of issues relating to the treatment of asylum seekers detained on Christmas Island, including the timeliness of the status assessment process, the lack of adequate services and facilities, overcrowding and the treatment of unaccompanied minors and families with children. In light of these conditions, the report asserts that “the stage has been reached where the current scale of operations on Christmas Island is not sustainable”. The report makes six recommendations to Government to improve conditions on Christmas Island. The report can be read at www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/christmas_island_immigration_detention_facilities_report.pdf

Minister announces new multicultural policy

RCOA welcomes the announcement by Immigration Minister Chris Bowen of a new a new national multicultural policy, *The People of Australia*. The policy was unveiled at an address given by the Minister at the Sydney Institute on 16 February. Among the policy measures to be introduced will be the establishment of a new independent advisory body, the Australian Multicultural Council, to act as a champion for multiculturalism in the community and advise the Government on multicultural affairs; the formulation of a National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy; and the renaming of the position held by Senator Kate Lundy to Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

REMINDER: Call for partners to conduct dialogues with refugee women

RCOA is working with the Centre for Refugee Research and a group of refugee organisations and advocates to coordinate a series of dialogues with refugee women. We are seeking support from organisations across Australia in hosting a refugee women’s dialogue in their local area between March and April 2011 to discuss concerns, aspirations and ideas for improving the lives of refugee women

locally and around the world. A national Women's Dialogue will be held on 14 June as part of the 2011 Refugee Conference to bring together the outcomes of these local dialogues, with a representative from each local dialogue attending the national event. Dialogues may be large or small, formal or informal. An information package and reporting structure will be made available to organisations running the dialogues. As there is currently no funding available, we are asking host organisations to seek local funding and support for their dialogue, including funding for representatives to attend the national dialogue in Sydney in June 2011. For more information, or to express your interest in hosting a dialogue, please email refugeewomenaustralia@gmail.com or call Geraldine Doney at the Centre for Refugee Research on (02) 9385 1961 or 0411 051 013. Further details will become available on the 2011 Refugee Conference website at refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au.

Early bird registration extended for 2011 Refugee Conference

The 2011 Refugee Conference will be held from 14–17 June, 2011 at the University of New South Wales Kensington Campus, Sydney. The conference, which marks the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention, will provide a timely opportunity to reflect on the strengths and achievements of the 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. Early bird registration has been **extended until 20 March 2011**. Further information including key dates and registration details can be found at refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au.

Australia appears before Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. Australia appeared before the UPR on 27 January 2011. The review scrutinised a wide range of human rights issues in Australia and made 145 recommendations for improving Australia's human rights protections. The review called on Australia to safeguard the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and honour its obligations under the Refugee Convention, particularly in relation to non-refoulement and the treatment of asylum seekers who arrive without authorisation. It also urged Australia to review its mandatory detention regime through limiting detention to the shortest time necessary, improving conditions in detention, considering alternatives to detention and addressing the detention of children. The review also recommended that Australia should continue to work with countries in the region to strengthen regional frameworks for addressing irregular migration in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. Further information about Australia's appearance before the UPR can be found at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/AUSession10.aspx. RCOA's submission to the UPR process can be read at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1007_UPR_RCOA.pdf

UN launches first World Interfaith Harmony Week

Following a resolution of the UN General Assembly in November 2010, the UN launched the first World Interfaith Harmony Week in February. The event will be held annually in the first week of February and aims to promote interfaith harmony and goodwill, mutual understanding and inter-religious dialogue. The inaugural World Interfaith Harmony Week was celebrated with a broad range of activities around the world, including interfaith breakfasts, film screenings and talks. For further information, visit worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com

COMING EVENTS

Friday March 4 & Saturday March 5 – Adelaide

Footsteps Through Africa: Stories, Song and Dance

A poignant, uplifting and vibrant production which will have audiences stamping, clapping, moving and grooving to the rhythm of African life. A production by African Soul.

Details: 7.00pm; tickets \$20, concession \$17; The Garage International @ NACC, 176 Tynte Street, North Adelaide SA; bookings 1300 374643 or book direct through Gabi on 0401 464 389 or info@africansoul.com.au

Friday 4 March to Wednesday 16 March - Sydney

Harmony Day celebration: photography exhibition

The *Settling Dust* exhibition features the photographs of Christopher Lawrie, who has incorporated portraits of refugee and migrant students from Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre into landscape

photographs taken on location around Australia. The exhibition opening includes Harmony Day celebrations such as music and performances reflecting on harmony between cultures.

Details: opening night March 5 2:00pm-4:00pm; Hazlehurst Community College, 782 Kingsway, Gymea NSW; for further details call (02) 8536 5700 or visit www.hazlehurst.com.au.

Saturday March 5 – Brisbane
Queensland Flood Relief fund raising event

The event, organised by Queensland Multicultural Communities and Businesses, will include an auction (with auctioneer Deputy Mayor Graham Quirk), entertainment by South Pacific Island Dance Group Brisbane Babas Band and Getano Bann. There will be great raffle prizes. All proceeds will go the Premier's Flood Relief Appeal.

Details: 3.45pm-7.00pm; \$50 per person includes finger food (no alcohol will be served); Qld Police Service Academy, Rudd Street, Oxley QLD; please emailqmc.aus@gmail.com for more information about tickets or ring Dr K.K. Nava 0400 820013 or Shan Ju Lin 0410 567 618.

Saturday 5 March – Sydney
Salvos Legal 2011 Lecture Series

This lecture series will explain the important work of the Salvation Army's initiative called Salvos Legal Humanitarian, a full-time self sustaining legal service providing free advice and representation to those in need who cannot afford a lawyer. Attendance at the Lecture Series is by donation and all proceeds will go to the Salvos Legal Humanitarian. Guest speakers are currently serving members of the Judiciary giving their time voluntarily.

Details: 9.00am-4.00pm; 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW (opposite Downing Centre); register at www.salvoslegal.org.au or by calling (02) 9213 3902.

Saturday 5 March – Sydney
Community Expo: Information for Migrants

To celebrate Harmony Day, the Crows Nest Centre along with NSW Health, TAFE, Transcultural Mental Health and NSW SLASA are holding an expo to provide a range of information to new migrants. Information will be available on settlement services, health, council services and dementia and aged care. The event will feature a Brazilian show, flamenco dancer, origami workshop and Brazilian Carnivale (Capoiera show).

Details: 10:00am-1:00pm; The Mosman Village Art & Craft Market, Mosman Square, Village Green, Spit Junction NSW.

Tuesday 8 March – Australia wide
Australian Women: Shaping a Nation

To celebrate the centenary of International Women's Day, this inspiring documentary commemorates the achievements of Australian women who have helped shape the nation. The documentary will showcase the achievements of 20 Australian women, including Dr Eileen Pittaway, Director of the Centre for Refugee Research at the University of New South Wales. In the past decade, Dr Pittaway has conducted research, provided training to refugees, UN and NGO staff in refugee camps and urban settings, acted as technical advisor to a number of projects, and evaluated humanitarian and development projects in Kenya, Thailand, Ethiopia, Bougainville, Egypt and Sri Lanka.

Details: 9:30pm; Bio (Foxtel/Austar channel 117).

Tuesday 8 March – Bendigo
Women on the Bridge: International Women's Day event

On March 8, 2010, hundreds of Congolese and Rwandan women united on a bridge to demand an end to violence that had caused over 5.4 million deaths and hundreds of thousands of rapes. Together they cried out to the world for an end to war. They tied together banners of fabric on which they had painted their vision for a peaceful future. To honour and support them, Women for Women International are encouraging women all around the world to gather on bridges in a show of global solidarity. EASE and the Centre for Non Violence invite Bendigo women to come together on March 8 to express their support.

Details: Chinese Museum Gardens; 12.15pm-12.45pm approx. immediately following the City of Greater Bendigo's community morning tea in the Civic Gardens; while this is a Women for Women event, men are most welcome; for more information contact Michelle at EASE on (03) 5434 4111.

Tuesday 8 March to Sunday 13 March – Brisbane

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 on Friday 11 March from 6.00pm-9.00pm; Bleeding Heart Gallery, 166 Ann Street, Brisbane QLD; for more information go to www.diasporalanka.com/blog e-mail diasporalanka@gmail.com or call 0403 694 132.

Wednesday 9 March – Sydney

International Women's Day Celebration: Celebrate Women in Campsie

To celebrate 100 years of International Women's Day, there will be a free event in Campsie jointly organised by the City of Canterbury, Canterbury Women's Issues Network and the NSW Government. Guest speakers include: Mayor Robert Furolo MP, The Hon Linda Burney MP, Ms Eva Cox and a celebration of the African Women's Health Project.

Details: 9.30am arrival, 10.00am-12.00pm; Orion Centre, 155 Beamish Street., Campsie NSW; morning tea will be provided; RSVP to (02) 9789 9441.

Thursday 10 March – Sydney

Women & Human Rights Forum: 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day

Join us for lunch with speaker Nasima Rahmani from Afghanistan. Nasima was a student who studied at UTS for 18 months. She was one of the first Peace Scholars from Afghanistan whose scholarship was made possible through a collaboration between the Peace Scholarship Program and the United Nations Development Fund for Women Australia (UNIFEM). After completing her final semester of the Masters of Law at UTS and achieving outstanding results, she returned to Afghanistan to promote gender equality and education for Afghan women. Nasima now works for ActionAid and is in Australia to promote ActionAid's project Afghanistan: Paralegal training and community education on violence against women.

Details: 1.00pm-3.00pm; UTS, Sydney, Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, conference room, level 3, MaryAnne House, 645 Harris Street (cnr Harris & MaryAnne str.), Sydney NSW; RSVP to joanna.leonard@uts.edu.au

Friday 11 March - Melbourne

Melbourne Food & Wine Festival

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

Tuesday 15 March – Sydney

Chain Reaction Foundation Breakfast Café: Julian Burnside AO QC guest speaker

Human Rights lawyer Julian Burnside will speak on Social Inclusion and Human Rights.

Details: 7.45am for 8.00am; KPMG, level 15, 10 Shelley Street, Kings Wharf, Sydney NSW; to RSVP email Peggy Cameron peggy@chainreaction.org.au or call (02) 9953 3287.

Thursday 17 March - Sydney

Australians All – Photographic exhibition

Part of the City of Sydney's Living in Harmony festival, Louise Whelan's 50 photographs on display are part of a wider photographic documentation of all ethnic communities in Australia. Louise Whelan is collaborating with fellow photographer John Immig on this important project endorsed by the State Library of NSW.

Details: Mon to Fri 9:30am-5:30pm, Sat 11:00am-4:00pm; Pine Street Gallery, 64 Pine Street, Chippendale NSW; for more information call (02) 9245 1503.

Thursday 17 March – Melbourne

Launch of “Tuning in to Kids” resources in four languages

The Tuning in to Kids parenting program assists parents to teach children how to understand, communicate and regulate their emotions. As the result of a successful partnership between Mindful Centre at The University of Melbourne, Parentslink at MacKillop Family Services and the Portland House Foundation, the parent resources of this highly regarded program have been translated into four community languages – Amharic, Arabic, Somali and Vietnamese. Come and hear from the two authors of the Tuning in to Kids program, Dr Sophie Havighurst and Ms Ann Harley and from Hien Bui, a Vietnamese facilitator of this program. Following the seminar Mr Frank Peppard, Chairperson of MacKillop will launch the new CD with parent resources in community languages.

Details: 9:30am–12:30pm; Convention Centre, Victoria University Sunshine Campus, 460 Ballarat Road, Sunshine VIC (Melways Map 26 H10); morning tea and lunch provided. RSVP by 10 March to Jenni Taylor on (03) 9699 9177 or jennifer.taylor@mackillop.org.au

Saturday 19 March – Sydney

Celebration of African Cultures Festival 2011

This day of celebration provides opportunities for people from different African cultures to share their cultures and promote cross cultural understanding with the wider Western Sydney communities. The day will showcase the diverse African cultures, traditions, food, music, artists and performers who call Australia home. Highlights include the African Market place with stalls selling everything African including handmade jewellery, art, sculpture and clothing from across the African continent; the Nile food court with a taste of traditional African food; and the Watoto corner for lots of children’s activities including a jumping castle, face painting and animal farm. Take part in dance workshops, hair beading, henna painting and basket making, learn how to use African drums and join in soccer and AFL games. Come along, dress up in your African colours and celebrate everything African.

Details: 11:00am-5:00pm; Auburn Park, corner of Hutchinson and Macquarie Roads, Auburn NSW. This is a free event. For more details, contact Fatma Isir on 0407 904 526, Beatrice Sesay on 0403 562 595 or Mereline Murimwararami on 0451 970 678, or e-mail afripcultures@hotmail.com. If you are interested in having a stall please call Fatma Isir on 0407 904 526 or email afripcultures@hotmail.com

Saturday 19 March – Sydney

WOW Blacktown Multicultural Fiesta 2011

This Fiesta, Job & Business Forum will celebrate Blacktown’s diversity through multicultural entertainment in songs and dance, sport, food stalls and exhibition of arts and crafts.

Details: 9.00am-5.00pm; \$10 with part of proceeds going to Queensland flood appeal; Blacktown Olympic Park Athletic Centre, Eastern Road, Rooty Hill NSW; for more info contact Raquel on 0401 670 188 or email: r.pellero@yahoo.com.au

Monday 21 March to Sunday 27 March – Australia wide

A Taste of Harmony

An initiative of The Scanlon Foundation, A Taste of Harmony encourages all workplaces to celebrate their diversity by gathering colleagues together over a delicious lunch made up of foods from different lands.

Details: for more information visit www.tasteofharmony.org.au

Wednesday 23 March – Sydney

Evening workshop: Working effectively with refugee children and families

Participants in this workshop will gain an understanding of what refugee families endure, what challenges they face and how we can best support them to settle into our services. This workshop will provide educators with the opportunity to enhance skills and knowledge to offer appropriate and sensitive care to refugee children; especially children who are victims of torture and trauma. Educators will also explore resources that can be used to support refugee children and their families.

Details: 6:00pm-9:00pm; \$33; Auburn RSL Club, 33 Northumberland Road, Auburn NSW; for more information go to www.cscentral.org.au

Thursday 24 March – Melbourne

Workplace Health for Immigrant and Refugee Women

The seminar will address issues that immigrant and refugee women face in the workplace and the implications for their health and wellbeing. Issues that will be covered during the seminar include: stress, anxiety, violence, bullying and discrimination. Guest speakers include: Professor Santina Bertone, Jennifer O'Donnell-Pirisi and Adele Murdolo.

Details: 9:00pm-2:00pm; \$65/person includes lunch and GST; Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Suite 207, level 2, Carringbush Bldg, 134 Cambridge Street, Collingwood VIC; register by 18 March; for a registration form email reception@mcwh.com.au or call (03) 9418 0999

Friday 1 April to Thursday 14 April – Melbourne

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 on Friday 1 April from 6.00pm-9.00pm; The Highway Gallery, 14 The Highway, Mount Waverley VIC; for more information go to www.diasporalanka.com/blog e-mail diasporalanka@gmail.com or call 0403 694 132

Saturday 2 April – Perth

Multicultural Come and Try event for soccer, AFL, basketball and other sports

The City of Sterling's Recreation Department in Perth will be holding a free come and try event on the reserve behind Herb Graham Recreation Centre.

Details: 10.00am-2.00pm; Mirrabooka Regional Open Space (behind Herb Graham Recreation Centre); for more information contact the Special Projects Officer at the City of Stirling on (08) 9205 7335.

Friday 15 April – Brisbane

Queensland Multicultural Council Inc presents 'Love City Hall Concert'

This event aims to raise funds for the Brisbane City Hall Renovation. International singer Kamahl and Thanh Bui, in the top 8 of 2008 Australian Idol, will perform.

Details: 6:30pm-7:30pm networking, 7:30pm concert starts; tickets \$50, \$70 or \$100; RNA Coffee Club, Gregory Terrace, Bowen Hills, Brisbane; for more info contact Dr Bui 0414 738093 or Wayne Ko on 0412 046 201.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Australian Human Rights Commission report on Leonora Immigration detention facility

The Australian Human Rights Commission has released its report on the immigration detention facility in Leonora. The report raises concerns about the remoteness of the facility and the consequent difficulties in accessing appropriate services (particularly health services); the harsh physical environment in Leonora; the lack of recreation space at the facility; and the length of detention, particularly for children, with more than 60 percent of detainees (including 50 children) having been detained for more than six months at the time of the Commission's visit. The report concludes that the Leonora facility "is not an appropriate place to hold families with children in detention, particularly for long periods of time". It calls for an end to mandatory detention and recommends that people should not be held in immigration detention in remote locations such as Leonora. The report can be read at www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/idc2011_leonora.html

The Brotherhood Library Current Awareness Portal (BroCAP)

BroCAP was developed to alert Brotherhood of St Laurence staff, on a daily basis, to the latest current awareness social policy information from Australia and overseas. It is designed to streamline the process of keeping up to date with the latest developments in social policy relevant to the work of the Brotherhood. BroCAP is updated continually and information is posted, where possible, as soon as it enters the public domain. The BroCAP team monitors information from government departments, academic institutions, think tanks, research organisations, charities and clearinghouses. To access BroCAP, visit www.bsl.org.au/BroCAP.aspx

Showcase your projects on the Integration: Building Inclusive Societies (IBIS) website

The UN Alliance of Civilizations (UANOC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have jointly built this interactive community website to showcase international good practice in migrant and refugee social inclusion. If your agency has a project or initiative that you would like to showcase on the IBIS website, simply submit it online via this link:

www.unaoc.org/communities/migrationintegration/integration-practices/submit-a-practice. For further information visit www.unaoc.org/communities/migrationintegration or contact Con Pagonis cpagonis@mav.asn.au

UNAOC is currently in discussion with a range of Australian organisations to plan an IBIS regional launch and workshop in Melbourne later this year. It will be publicised as soon as arrangements are firmer.

Hear Our Voice: Cultural Perspectives on Mental Health Care

This DVD resource from Multicultural Mental Health Australia aims to help mental health services, consumers and carers understand how culture can impact on perceptions of mental illness and recovery and encourage their participation in mental health advisory groups. For more information email admin@mmha.org.au

Download refugee health information for free on YouTube

Extracts from the NSW Refugee Health Improvement Network's *Health Check DVD: Health information for recently arrived African communities in Australia* are now available for free online in seven languages. Go to www.youtube.com/user/refugeehealth

African parenting stories

This community media project devised by Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) documents the challenges faced by recently-arrived families as they deal with settlement issues and transitioning their family life to a completely new cultural and social context. An extract is available at ice.org.au/newswire/2010/09/radio-play-online-parenting-stories

Free NSW legal information services

LawAccess NSW is a free, statewide government telephone service which provides a starting point for people who have a legal problem in NSW. The service can assist with a range of legal problems or questions by giving legal information over the telephone, referring people to other legal assistance services and, in some cases, arranging for a lawyer to call the person to provide telephone legal advice. Priority customers include persons from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. LawAccess can be contacted on 1300 888 529 between 9:00am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). LawAccess also has a website which provides a starting point to search for information about the law and legal issues: www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au

Free educational materials from IMCOLOURBLIND

IMCOLOURBLIND Incorporated is an initiative run by university students. The campaign promotes seeing everyone as an equal human being, by advocating for non-discrimination and inclusivity. IMCOLOURBLIND has been distributing educational materials to refugee detention centres across Australia to combat discrimination and boost access to education. Unfortunately, at the moment they have not been able to get these materials to the centres and would be happy to supply them to community facilities. For further information contact Rob Wetton on 0439 995 400 or rob@imcolourblind.org

Report on barriers to the justice system faced by CALD women experiencing family violence

This report from the InTouch Inc. Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence explores in depth the barriers faced by Victorian women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have been in situations of family violence and who have accessed or attempted to access the legal system. It also identifies as priorities and strategies for change. The report can be downloaded from www.lgpvaw.net.au/admin/file/content100/c4/final%20report%20publication.pdf

Special report on unaccompanied humanitarian minors

This special report from ABC investigates the situation of unaccompanied minors who seek asylum in Australia. The report includes background information, statistics and profiles of former refugees who arrived as unaccompanied minors. The report is at www.abc.net.au/news/events/castaway-kids

The Rights of Refugees under International Law

This book by Professor James Hathaway presents a comprehensive analysis of the human rights of refugees as set out in the UN Refugee Convention. It can now be accessed for free through Google Books: books.google.com.au

OPPORTUNITIES

Interest-free travel loan scheme for SHP proposers

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) can assist SHP proposers to meet up to 75% of travel costs of refugees entering Australia on a subclass 202 visa. The proposer of the 202 entrant is responsible for repaying the loan in full, in an agreed timeframe. Loans are paid in fortnightly instalments through Centerlink's Centrepay system. DIAC in conjunction with the IOM has produced translated posters and brochures to promote the scheme. They are available in six languages: Arabic, Assyrian, Dari, Dinka, Karen and Tamil. For more information visit www.iomaustralia.org

Social Leadership Development Program

Applications are sought for participation in the Social Leadership Development Program, a 12-month program for people in communities around Australia who want to develop and exercise social leadership. The program runs from 1 May 2011 to 30 April 2012 and is an initiative of the Centre for Civil Society. **Applications close 31 March.** To register, call Vern Hughes on 0425 722 890 or go to www.civilsociety.org.au/SocialLeadership-Registration.htm

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) seeks assistance to update CALD data statistics

The ABS through the National Migrants Statistics Unit (NMSU) produces a Guide to Migrant Statistical Sources. This product provides researchers with a ready reference to sources of statistical information from public, private and academic sources. The ABS wants to compile new entries for an update to this guide. If organisations collect or produce statistics related to migrants which can be made available to the public (on a paid or free basis) and would be willing to have an entry included in the guide, the ABS would like to be contacted. Please call Melissa Hunt (08) 8237 7650 or Julie Hargreaves (08) 8237 7529 for more information.

2011 International Unity In Diversity Conference: call for papers

The conference theme this year is: Media, Marginality and Diversity and will be held from 18-19 August at Rydges Southbank Townsville Hotel and Convention Centre, North Queensland. It will be held in association with the 17th annual Cultural Festival in Southbank. Abstracts for papers and biodata are **due 31 March.** For further information contact Shevindi De Motte (07) 4772 4800 or shevindi@townsvilleic.com.au

Professional development opportunity for early childhood professionals

This professional development opportunity is designed for professionals working with children learning English as a second or additional language. It is provided by FKA Children's Services and has been developed in partnership with Dr Priscilla Clarke and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. For further information go to www.fka.com.au/training

Traditional craft practitioners needed for CALD Traditional Craft Skills Program (Adelaide)

Craftsouth in Adelaide is looking for traditional craft practitioners from CALD communities, in particular refugees, who would like to participate in either the Community Workshops or in teaching Artist Workshops. If there are any individuals with skills such as basketry, embroidery, carpet weaving or tile-painting and would like to take part in this project please contact Kirsty Darlaston 0439 505 850, kirsty.darlaston@craftsouth.org.au or Craftsouth (08) 8410 1822.

City of Sydney Council Matching Grants Program

The City of Sydney supports community initiatives through its Matching Grants Program. Matching Grants are designed to support neighbourhood-based groups with the purchase of materials and

supplies that will assist them to facilitate small and simple projects that bring the community together. **Applications close 21 March.** Submission forms and guidelines for the Matching Grants Program are available on the City's website: www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/matchinggrants or via email laps@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Building Resilience In Transcultural Australians

If you are an adult or a parent from a migrant background living in Brisbane, these workshops might be for you. These eight two-hour group workshops aim to assist adults and parents from a multicultural background to cope with migration and re-settlement. They will cover such issues as health and wellbeing, social connections, communication skills, evolving roles, cultural strengths and resilience. There are a number of possible dates in March and April. To register email Gilles Forget Gilles_Forget@health.qld.gov.au or Farah Suleman Farah_Suleman@health.qld.gov.au or call (07) 3167 8333.

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. Contributions must be **received by March 31, 2011**. For further information, go to pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/refuge/about/submissions#authorGuidelines

Curious Works invites you to be part of the Banyan Project (Sydney)

The Banyan Project is an arts project that intertwines the ancient and the new: Indian classical dance with video and web production. The project is an opportunity for any Sri Lankan who has come to Australia recently and has an interest in the arts. All ages and levels of experience are welcome. The course is free and priority will be given to refugees. The two classes being offered are a) Indian classical dance under Anandavalli, Lingalayam Dance Company and b) Video production and web design from Shakthidharan, Curious Works. For more information contact Shakthi on 0411 668 278 or shakthi@curiousworks.com.au

Short course on Australian Refugee Law and Practice

The Australian National University Migration Law Program has developed a new short course designed to give participants the skills and knowledge to effectively represent people seeking asylum in Australia. The course includes online teaching and learning over three weeks between 28 March and 17 April and face to face classes in Sydney on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 April. For further information, go to law.anu.edu.au/Legalworkshop/Migration/RefugeeShortCourse.aspx

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)

Asylum seeker fails in fiery suicide bid

An asylum seeker has tried to burn himself to death in Darwin's detention centre. The Immigration Department said the man suffered smoke inhalation and was released from Royal Darwin Hospital after a few hours. Pamela Curr of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre said the Burmese man was desperate to be reunited with his three children, who are in Malaysia. She said he was a Rohingya from a persecuted ethnic minority. (Northern Territory News, 1 February 2011)

Asylum seekers refuse offer of cash and tickets home

Australia's deal to return thousands of asylum seekers to Afghanistan is faltering and immigration detainees are resisting government incentives to leave. The Afghan Minister for Refugees, Jamaher Anwary, denied a deal he signed in Sydney allowing Australia to deport people who had failed in their bids for asylum. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen's spokeswoman played down Dr Anwary's comments yesterday and said the government would press ahead with forced returns. (The Age, 2 February 2011) www.theage.com.au/national/asylum-seekers-refuse-offer-of-cash-and-tickets-home-20110201-1acfm.html

Revealed: Australia's asylum plans

East Timor would be responsible for the legal processing and resettlement of asylum seekers trying to reach Australia, using its laws and diplomatic relationships, according to leaked documents prepared by

the Federal Government. The document from November entitled *A Regional Assessment Centre Concept*, shows the government intends to build a refugee processing centre in East Timor to hold between 1000 and 4000 people. The document also states the UNHCR would be sought to undertake the determination process for asylum seekers, but offers no indication the body has agreed to this. (Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 2011)

www.smh.com.au/national/revealed-australias-asylum-plans-20110201-1ackg.html

Ombudsman slams detention centre policy

There are too many people being detained at the Christmas Island detention centre, with the current scale of operations not sustainable, according to the peak government watchdog. The Commonwealth Ombudsman's report into the oversight of immigration processes on Christmas Island, finds conditions have worsened over the past two years. The Report made six recommendations to the Department of Immigration including "movement of as many detainees as quickly as possible". (The Australian, 3 February 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/ombudsman-slams-detention-centre-policy/story-e6frg6nf-1225999025058

More asylum seekers bound for mainland

More asylum seekers will be moved into mainland detention centres as the Federal Government continues to deal with overcrowding in the Christmas Island facility. This is in light of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's statement that the Christmas Island Detention Centre has become unsustainable. Mr Asher said that at the time his latest report was finalised, there were 2,757 asylum seekers living at the facility, which is well above capacity. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has acknowledged the problem and said the government was working hard to address it. (AAP Newswire, 3 February 2011)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/more-asylum-seekers-bound-for-mainland-20110203-1adz.html

Refugee translators 'unqualified'

Interpreters for asylum seekers on Christmas Island have been working without accreditation or translating experience. "Some of the interpreters are not competent because they are not actually interpreters," a source, who had worked on Christmas Island, said. The comments follow a report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman which found asylum seekers had been assigned interpreters who did not speak their language and were recording incorrect information on their asylum claims. Amnesty International Australia said the problems were common to detention centres in Darwin and at Curtin in Western Australia. DIAC admitted there were shortages and said it used nationally accredited translators "where possible". (The Age, 4 February 2011)

www.theage.com.au/national/refugee-translators-unqualified-20110203-1afh2.html

Bowen 'overriding' advice on refugees

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has been accused of taking a tougher line than any of his predecessors in enforcing his right to intervene and issue visas to desperate refugees, with the minister refusing applications after they gained preliminary approval from the former minister and the department. Prominent immigration lawyer David Bitel said Mr Bowen had adopted what appeared to be a "totally hostile approach to all cases" and was ignoring the heavy responsibility he bore as a minister given unfettered discretion under the Migration Act to exercise that discretion justly and fairly. (The Australian, 7 February 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/bowen-overriding-advice-on-refugees/story-fn59niix-1226001084487

Bowen defends use of visa power

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has defended his use of the special right to intervene and issue visas to desperate refugees as he sees fit, revealing he has granted 101 visas since taking over the portfolio in September. His office would not provide a breakdown of the countries of origin of the people granted visas. Mr Bowen said he was careful in his considerations, and rejected claims he was unfair. (The Australian, 8 February 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/chris-bowen-defends-use-of-visa-power/story-fn59niix-1226001793868

Adelaide transit accommodation now operational

The Adelaide Immigration Transit Accommodation (AITA) has become operational, after being developed by DIAC to house clients who are not considered a security risk and have been assessed as suitable for this type of purpose-built accommodation. It is expected that people will begin to be transferred into the

facility in coming days, as the department continues to house its clients in accommodation which best suits their needs. (Media Release, Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 8 February 2011)
www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/media_releases/898

Stopping people smuggling by stopping the money flow

Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor today introduced a Bill designed to help stem the flow of money for people smuggling ventures, as well as other serious crimes. The *Combating the Financing of People Smuggling and Other Measures Bill* introduces amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 to strengthen the regulation of the remittance sector. This Bill complements laws introduced last year that mean people who provide material support to people smugglers now face up to ten years jail and fines of up to \$110,000. (Media Release, Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Home Affairs, 9 February 2011).

www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/oconnor.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2011_FirstQuarter_9February2011-Stoppingpeoplesmugglingbystoppingthemoneyflow

Minister backs detainee community work

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has revealed he would like to make it possible for asylum seekers held in detention to work for "the good of the community" while their claims for refugee status are being assessed. Specifically, Mr Bowen said he was "sympathetic to the argument" that asylum seekers should be allowed to volunteer for the Queensland floods clean-up, although under current legislation they could not be paid. (The Age, 10 February 2011)

www.theage.com.au/national/minister-backs-detainee-community-work-20110209-1an2t.html

ASIO security checks 'unfair' on Burmese

Burmese Rohingya asylum seekers detained in Darwin's immigration detention centre are calling on ASIO to explain why they have had to wait so long for release, despite getting refugee status. The 14 Burmese say they were told by the Immigration Department nine months ago they had been approved as refugees subject to security checks. ASIO says it won't comment on applications by individuals or particular ethnic groups. (ABC News, 10 February 2011)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/02/10/3135097.htm

Gillard government's asylum-seeker bill has \$1.9bn blowout

The Gillard government's immigration budget will blow out by \$1.9 billion over the next four years, despite a \$290 million boost to funding, the Coalition claims. Special Minister of State, Gary Gray announced that the funding for irregular maritime arrivals would be boosted from \$471m for 2010-11. A spokesman for Immigration Minister Chris Bowen said the government was committed to working to develop a sustainable regional response to the issue of increased boat arrivals. (The Australian, 11 February 2011)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/gillard-governments-asylum-seeker-bill-has-19bn-blowout/story-fn59niix-1226003982500?referrer=email

UN rights commissioner to visit Australia

Navi Pillay, The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is expected to visit Australia later this year following recent criticism of Australia's human rights record. Rachel Ball from the Human Rights Law Resource Centre says there are obvious issues that need to be discussed. Ball stated that "The reviews that we've been through at the UN over the last few years have highlighted some significant problems, including in the area of refugees and particularly our practices of mandatory immigration detention." She hopes that this is an issue that the high commissioner considers in the course of her visit. Human rights and refugee groups say they will also use the visit to highlight the creation of a human rights act. (ABC News, 11 February 2011)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/02/11/3136122.htm

Christmas Island bodies taken to Sydney

The bodies of 17 victims of the Christmas Island boat tragedy were taken to Sydney last night. Families of the victims gathered at Sydney Airport to see the caskets arriving but were not allowed to view or take possession of the bodies because of disease concerns. Jamal Daoud, of the Social Justice Network, said the families, many of them Iraqi, were considering legal action against the government to gain the right to take the bodies to Iraq for burial or bury them here themselves. Funerals were to be held in the coming week. (Sun Herald, 12 February 2011)

Twice the wait in crowded detention

Detention centres are overcrowded and the average time spent there has grown from 25 days in 2008 to 183 days last year, official documents from DIAC reveal. In addition, the minimum space requirements for detainees in centres are not being met, a symptom of overcrowding. The documents also reveal there were 2,034 “reportable incidents” including violent assaults, self-harm and hunger strikes in detention centres between July 2009 and September 2010. (Sun Herald, 13 February 2011)
www.smh.com.au/national/twice-the-wait-in-crowded-detention-20110212-1arad.html

Taxpayer dollars failing to deter boats

More than three-quarters of Australia-bound asylum seekers on boats paid a people-smuggler in exchange for the promise of permanent residency last year despite the government paying millions to help Indonesia stem the illegal trade. DIAC revealed it provided \$26.5 million to the International Organisation for Migration in the 2009-10 financial year, at least \$8 million of which was funnelled to Indonesian authorities to manage irregular migration flows and people-smuggling activities. (The Australian, 14 February 2011)
www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/taxpayer-dollars-failing-to-deter-boats/story-fn7dlx76-1226005383305

Funerals for asylum boat victims in Sydney

The Federal Government has defended its decision to cover the cost of flying the asylum seeker group from Christmas Island to Sydney where the funerals will be held. The opposition says everyday Australians attending funerals around the country are not entitled to such government largesse. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen said the decision to hold the funerals in Sydney was taken following discussions the Australian Federal Police, which is responsible for the bodies, had with the families of the victims. (AAP, 15 February 2011)
news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/funerals-for-asylum-boat-victims-in-sydney-20110215-1atza.html

Amnesty slams Gillard on refugee policies

The Federal Government is backsliding fast on its promise of a humane approach to refugees, Amnesty International says. Amnesty has slammed the government for its “increasingly ad-hoc” approach to refugee policy and worsening conditions in Australia’s overcrowded detention centres. A new agreement that allows Australia to send failed Afghan asylum seekers home against their will was of particular concern, Amnesty said. (AAP, 15 February 2011)
news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/amnesty-slams-gillard-on-refugee-policies-20110215-1attk.html

Tiny coffins mark asylum-seeker grief

The burial of eight people who died in the SIEV-221 December boat disaster released a torrent of grief yesterday. Wailing filled the air at Rookwood cemetery in Sydney’s west as three Muslim funerals were conducted. The babies were carried in tiny white coffins. Later, at a Christian funeral service at Castlebrook Memorial Park, Rouse Hill, five people were buried. Their families knelt by the graves, crying. Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the burial should have taken place much sooner. (The Australian, 16 February 2011)
www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/tiny-coffins-mark-asylum-seeker-grief/story-fn59niix-1226006621720

Hockey calls for compassion in funeral row

Deep ideological divisions have reopened inside the Federal Coalition after Joe Hockey slapped down claims by Scott Morrison that the government was wasting taxpayers’ money on the funerals of asylum seekers killed in the SIEV-221 boat tragedy. Hockey stated “No matter what the colour of your skin, no matter what the nature of your faith, if your child has died or a father has died, you want to be there for the ceremony to say goodbye, and I totally understand the importance of this to those families.” (Sydney Morning Herald, 16 February 2011)
<http://www.smh.com.au/national/hockey-calls-for-compassion-in-funeral-row-20110215-1av7e.html>

Bowen revives migrant strategy

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has offered an impassioned defence of Australian multiculturalism rejecting a rising tide of criticism directed at the policy by European leaders as he unveiled a new multicultural strategy. The minister announced a suite of changes to the government’s multiculturalism strategy, including beefing up the Australian Multicultural Council, which will now act as a “champion for

multiculturalism” and advise the government on how best to direct government services to new migrants. (The Australian, 17 February)

Orphan to be with family in days

Nine-year-old Seena will now be released into community care in Sydney within days, despite being sent back to the Christmas Island detention centre with 20 other grief-stricken asylum seekers yesterday. The decision came as lawyers representing the boy’s relatives prepared to mount a court battle to force his release and lodged a complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission that his treatment breached Australia’s treaty obligations. (The Age, 18 February 2011)
www.theage.com.au/national/orphan-to-be-with-family-in-days-20110217-1ay7g.html

Push for child detention releases in Australia

The case of an orphaned nine-year-old asylum seeker has led to a new round of demands that the Australian government deliver on its commitment to move all children out of immigration detention. Last year, the Immigration Minister Chris Bowen made a promise to move out every child in detention centres by June this year. So far, only about 100 have been moved, leaving 1,044 young detainees still in centres around the country. (Australia Network News, 19 February 2011)
australianetworknews.com/stories/201102/3143358.htm?desktop

Immigration slams UN plan for child detainees’ guardian

The UN wants to strip Immigration Minister Chris Bowen of guardianship over hundreds of foreign children detained while they seek refuge in Australia. But the Immigration Department has branded the plan, championed by the Greens in legislation now being reviewed by a Senate inquiry, as unworkable. The department has revealed that 566 children were placed in immigration detention during 2009-10, as a “last resort”. But the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has told the senate inquiry the Immigration Minister’s delegated role as guardian “may be a conflict of interest”. It wants an independent guardian – such as the proposed Children’s Commissioner – to represent the interests of children in detention. (The Australian, 21 February 2011)
www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration-slams-un-plan-for-child-detainees-guardian/story-fn59niix-1226009084547

Ten Oceanic Viking Tamils remain stranded

Ten Sri Lankan asylum seekers involved in the 2009 Oceanic Viking stand-off remain stranded in a UNHCR transit centre in Romania. In addition, the Australian Immigration Department has conceded that eight Tamil adults judged by ASIO to be security risks and two dependent children could end up detained indefinitely on Christmas Island unless another country agrees to take them in. The group of asylum seekers were coaxed off the Australian customs ship by Rudd Government promise of rapid processing and resettlement in a third country within 12 weeks. (21 February 2011, AAP)
www.news.com.au/national/ten-oceanic-viking-tamils-remain-stranded/story-e6frfkvr-1226009571264

Opposition MP breaks ranks over refugee policy

A backbench MP with Australia’s opposition Liberal party, Judi Moylan, has broken ranks over the Coalition’s asylum seeker policy and called for an end to what she calls “hysterical rhetoric” over refugee policies. Ms Moylan’s stand comes after Coalition immigration spokesman Scott Morrison moved a motion in Parliament to cap the number of refugee visas that can be granted to people arriving by boat. (Australia Network News, 22 February)
australianetworknews.com/stories/201102/3145086.htm?desktop

Growing calls to ban child detention

There is renewed pressure on the federal government to release asylum seeker children from Australia’s detention centres. Former child detainees have handed the Immigration Minister a petition with almost 40,000 signatures, calling for an end to the practice. (SBS, 24 February)
www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1490367/Growing-calls-to-ban-child-detention

Protection visa hole to be plugged

The Federal Government is plugging a hole in Australia’s protection visa process that it admits is very stressful to some refugees. The problem forces some applicants to go through lengthy processes that are bound to fail, before finally gaining ministerial approval for a visa. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen today told parliament that under the Migration Act, only people fleeing persecution for one of five

reasons specified in the Refugee Convention could receive a protection visa through the usual process. However, some people fleeing significant harm, such as women from honour killings and homosexuals from persecution, fall outside these categories. This meant their applications would be rejected, initially and at review, even though Australia's obligations under other international treaties ensured they wouldn't be sent back. (AAP, 25 February)

www.news.com.au/breaking-news/protection-visa-hole-to-be-plugged/story-e6frfku0-1226011249347

'Touching and sad' family reunion for orphan Seena

Christmas Island orphan Seena Akhlaqi Sheikhdost has embraced his Australian cousins in a "touching and sad" reunion. It came after the Immigration Department flew Seena and some other survivors of the December 15 boat disaster into the high security Richmond air base on Thursday. The nine-year-old asylum seeker – known inside Christmas Island's family compound as the boy with the blank stare – is now living in a house in Sydney's west. He is with his aunt and uncle and young cousin Shirin, who arrived at Christmas Island on an asylum boat two days after the tragedy that killed about 50 people. They were released from detention on the remote Australian territory to continue to care for him. (The Australian, 26 February)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/touching-and-sad-family-reunion-for-orphan-seena/story-fn59niix-1226012256048