



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

6 April 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 calls for overhaul of immigration detention

RCOA has expressed dismay at the Australian Government's announcement that it will develop yet another immigration detention facility. The recent protests on Christmas Island and the suicides of two detainees in as many weeks have again highlighted the need for the Australian Government to overhaul its immigration detention strategy, rather than building new centres. The current system of indefinite, mandatory detention is at odds with the Government's own policy on immigration detention, which states that it should be used "as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time." RCOA is calling on the Australian Government to review its detention strategy with a view to developing processes for community supervision of asylum seekers after appropriate health, identity and security checks have been carried out – a practice which has been adopted successfully in many other western countries.

RCOA's media release on the new Tasmanian detention centre can be read here: www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2011/110405_Tasdetention.pdf Our media release on the Christmas Island protests can be read here: www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/media.html. A timeline of the Christmas Island protests compiled by RCOA is available at www.ajustaustralia.com/info/CIMarch2011_protest_timeline.pdf.

RCOA through the A Just Australia campaign is encouraging members and supporters to take action on immigration detention by writing to Minister for Immigration, the Hon Chris Bowen MP. For further information and to take action, visit www.ajustaustralia.com

New Humanitarian Settlement Service providers announced

The new Humanitarian Settlement Service (HSS) providers were announced on 5 April. There have been several changes of provider under the new contract, with Settlement Services International and Resolve FM taking over the contract for both Sydney regions; the Multicultural Development Association taking over the contract for South West Queensland; and PVS Workfind, the Multicultural Services Centre of WA and Communicare taking over the contract for both Perth regions. The contract for the Riverina region is still under negotiation. DIAC expects to finalise negotiations in the coming days. A list of HSS providers can be found at

www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/find-help/hss/hss_service_providers.pdf.

Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Kate Lundy's media release on the announcement can be found at

www.katelundy.com.au/2011/04/05/new-humanitarian-settlement-services-providers-announced

Invitation for submissions to 2011 UNHCR-NGO Consultations

The Australian Refugee Rights Alliance (ARRA) is a coalition of Australian NGOs, refugee advocates and academics who engage in advocacy at an international level with and on behalf of refugees in Australia and the region. Organisations involved in ARRA include RCOA, the University of New South Wales' Centre for Refugee Research, Amnesty International Australia and Act for Peace (National Council of Churches). Each year, representatives from ARRA travel to Geneva to participate in the annual consultations between the UNHCR and NGOs from around the world. ARRA is currently seeking

feedback from individuals and refugee community groups on current issues of concern they would recommend ARRA put forward during meetings with UNHCR. ARRA is particularly interested in current issues of concern to refugee populations in the Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa regions. Submissions can focus on any current issue, but should be limited to one page in length. For further details, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/unhcr.html

Deadline extended for 2011 NSW Refugee Week Small Grants program

To encourage community groups and organisations to celebrate Refugee Week by holding local events and functions, RCOA is offering a limited number of small grants of \$250 or \$500 to NSW-based organisations. These grants are made possible through the generous support of the NSW Community Relations Commission. The grants are designed to enable grass-roots community participation in events that include refugee communities during Refugee Week. The aim of events is to encourage Australians to think about the reasons refugees flee their homelands, the importance of providing safety and lasting security to people fleeing persecution and the positive contributions that refugees make to Australian society. Events should reflect this year's theme, "Freedom from Fear". ***The deadline for applications has been extended to 5:00pm Tuesday 12 April 2011.*** To apply for a NSW Refugee Week Small Grant, please download the grant guidelines and application form here:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rwgrants.html

UNHCR releases latest statistics on asylum application in industrialised countries

UNHCR's statistical overview of asylum applications in industrialised countries during 2010 has again revealed that Australia's share of global asylum applications remains very small. In 2010, Australia received 8,250 asylum applications, just 2.2 per cent of the 358,840 applications received across 44 industrialised nations. Of the 44 nations, Australia was ranked 14th overall and was 17th on a per capita basis. The industrialised countries with the largest number of asylum applications in 2010 were the United States (55,530), France (47,790), Germany (41,330), Sweden (31,820), Canada (23,160) and the United Kingdom (22,090). Asylum applications in Australia increased by around 30 per cent compared to the previous year. In real terms, however, this amounted to only 2,000 additional applications. Furthermore, while the number of applications in Australia increased, our global share of asylum applications remained steady at around two per cent. By comparison, the United States experienced a 13 per cent increase in asylum applications, which in real terms amounted to over 6,500 additional applications; and Germany's share of asylum applications almost doubled from seven per cent in 2009 to 12 per cent in 2010. Serbia was the largest source country for people making asylum applications in industrialised countries. A total of 28,901 applications were lodged by Serbians, the vast majority in European countries. Only five Serbians sought asylum in Australia. Afghanistan was the second largest source country for people making asylum applications in industrialised countries. The 1,262 applications lodged in Australia by Afghans made up only five per cent of the international total of 24,769. Afghans were over four times more likely to lodge an application in Germany than in Australia. The UNHCR report is available for download here: www.unhcr.org/4d8c5b109.html

RCOA calls for reform of security assessment processes for asylum seekers

RCOA has made a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's Review of Administration and Expenditure in Australian Intelligence Agencies. In the submission, RCOA expressed concern about the length of time taken to complete ASIO assessments for people seeking refugee protection, the impact on individuals of adverse findings and the absence of any independent review mechanism or capacity to respond to a negative assessment. The submission recommended that the Government implement strategies to expedite security assessments relating to protection claims and ensure all assessments are conducted within a reasonable timeframe; develop procedures to release from detention asylum seekers deemed not to pose a security risk; and amend legislation to allow Protection Visa applications who have received a negative security assessment to appeal the decision. Further information about the inquiry can be found at www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/pjicis/adminexp9/index.htm. RCOA's submission can be read at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1103_ASIO_sub.pdf

RCOA submission on a sustainable population strategy

RCOA has made a submission to the public consultation on the issues paper, "A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia". The submission called attention to the contributions of refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia's economic, social and cultural life and their key role in building a

sustainable future. It also highlighted strategies needed to support successful and sustainable settlement; the fundamentally unsustainable nature of Australia's mandatory detention policy due to its high economic, social and human costs; the detrimental impact of the current political and public debate on the development of a sustainable approach to refugee policy and the achievement of positive settlement outcomes; the importance of maintaining the strong humanitarian focus of Australia's offshore resettlement program; and the need to address the root causes of flight and secondary movement so as to create comprehensive, lasting solutions to refugee crises in our region. The issues paper and further information about the public consultation can be found at www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/population/index.html. RCOA's submission can be read at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1103_Sustainable_Population_sub.pdf

RCOA welcomes recommendations made under the Universal Periodic Review

RCOA has made a submission to the Attorney-General's Department on recommendations made to Australia under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. In the submission, RCOA welcomed the recommendations relating to mandatory detention, excised offshore places, the incorporation of Australia's international human rights obligations into domestic law and the need for regional cooperation to address irregular movement. The submission called on the Government to implement the recommendations made under the UPR, giving priority to areas of law and policy which are currently in serious breach of Australia's obligations under international human rights law. The submission can be read at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1103_UPR_sub.pdf

Ball Process develops first regional agreement on Irregular movement

The Fourth Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, co-chaired by Australia and Indonesia, was held in Bali on 30 March. At the conference, participating Ministers agreed that "an inclusive but non-binding regional cooperation framework would provide a more effective way for interested parties to cooperate to reduce irregular movement through the region". In recognition of the impact of inconsistent standards of refugee protection on irregular movement, participating Ministers agreed that "asylum seekers should have access to consistent assessment processes, whether through a set of harmonised arrangements or through the possible establishment of regional assessment arrangements". The Final Co-Chairs' Statement, outlining the key outcomes from the conference, can be downloaded at www.baliprocess.net/files/110330_FINAL_Ministerial_Co-chairs%20statement%20BRMC%20IV.doc

Guest Trainers selected for 2011 AUSCO Exchange Program

The call for Expressions of Interest for agencies to participate in the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Exchange Program 2011 yielded applications from a range of service providers designing and delivering settlement services and training programs for refugees and humanitarian entrants from the Middle East. Agencies selected to participate were the Australian Centre for Languages (ACL) and Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB). The two Guest Trainers nominated by these agencies - Daria Rzasa from ACL and Albert Aliander from SCAAB - will be deployed to Lebanon and Turkey in April and May respectively. ACL and SCAAB will host a two-week attachment in Australia for two AUSCO Trainers who deliver training in the Middle East in June 2011.

REMINDER: 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. Keynote speakers will include Assistant High Commissioner (Protection), UNHCR, Geneva; Rick Towle, Regional Representative, UNHCR; and Dr Jeff Crisp, Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Services, UNHCR. Policy makers, UNHCR representatives, academics, advocates, refugee service providers, refugees, students and community members are encouraged to attend. Further information including key dates and registration details can be found at refugeecon2011.arts.unsw.edu.au.

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.

COMING EVENTS

Monday 21 March to Friday 29 April – Melbourne

Children's Art Exhibition by New Star Arts School at Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery

Presented in partnership by Multicultural Arts Victoria and Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery, this exhibition highlights the importance of people from diverse backgrounds working harmoniously together for the benefit of our Australian community.

Details: 141 Queen Street, Melbourne; for more information call (03) 9642 2388 or email melb.artgallery@fgs.org.au

Thursday 7 & Friday 8 April – Sydney

Clinical Practice and New Developments in the treatment of refugee survivors of torture and trauma

This two-day workshop aims to provide clinicians with additional skills for clinical practice in the treatment of refugee survivors of torture and trauma.

Please go to the STARTTS website for more information www.startts.org.au

Details: 9.30am-4.30pm; \$249 per person, \$149 for students; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar NSW; for more information contact Jacqueline Donoso on (02) 9794 1900 or Jacqueline.Donosos@sswaha.nsw.gov.au, or visit www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=390

Friday 8 April – Sydney

Ahmadiyah and religious tolerance in Indonesia

Professor Dr Iur Adnan Buyung Nasution will discuss religious tolerance and the law in Indonesia, focusing on the persecution of Indonesian Ahmadis. Professor Nasution is widely regarded as Indonesia's leading advocate and trial lawyer. He is a pioneer of legal aid and law reform, as well as being a key figure in the development of human rights law and constitutionalism in Indonesia.

Details: 6.00pm-8.00pm; registration and refreshments from 5.30pm; Allens Arthur Robinson Lecture Theatre (LT 104), Sydney Law School, University of Sydney; contact (02) 9351 0238 or law.events@sydney.edu.au for more information.

Friday 8 April to Sunday 10 April – Sydney

Art for Ethiopia

An eclectic, exciting and colourful exhibition of well priced works by a variety of artists to raise funds for the work of Dr Catherine Hamlin and her team at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

Details: Red Door Gallery, 24 Morris Street, Summer Hill; gallery hours 10:00am-4:00pm or by appointment; there will also be a small selection of Ethiopian crafts; for more information call (02) 9799 7830.

Monday 11 April – Melbourne

Seminar on the right to health of refugees and skilled migrants

The Migration Institute of Australia's Centre for Migration Education and Research (ACMER) is hosting this free public interest seminar. Michal Morris, Executive Manager of the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH), will speak on issues relating to the right to health, with particular emphasis on refugees and skilled migrants, their health status and the implications of their current rights.

Details: 5.30pm-6.30pm, Saxon's Training Facilities, Level 8, 500 Collins Street, Melbourne; for further details and to register to go mia.org.au/events/ACMER-Lecture-Series-The-Right-to-Health-91.html

Monday 11 April to Sunday 24 April – Sydney

Impermanence: Expressions of Kyegu, Tibet

A photographic record, illustrated expressions and responses by Australian artist Jayne Shepherd to the earthquake in Tibet that happened a year ago. There will be two special events during the exhibition: drinks with the artist at 6pm Thursday 14 April (first anniversary of the earthquake) and 2pm Sunday 17 April chanting monks.

Details: TAP Gallery, 278 Palmer Street, Darlinghurst; for more information call (02) 9361 0440 or e-mail info@kyegurelief.org

Tuesday 12 April – Melbourne

Australia's Migration Program: International Education and Shaping the Nation

This seminar, presented by the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), examines the role of international education within Australia's migration program. It looks at the challenges of balancing a range of competing issues, interests and concerns, to government, education providers, students and the Australian community. The keynote speaker will be immigration lawyer Ms Maria Jockel.

Details: \$20/\$10 for AIIA members; \$30/\$15 non-members; 5.30pm – 7.00pm; Dyason House, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne; RSVP to (03) 9654 7271 or admin.vic@aiaa.asn.au

Tuesday 12 to Sunday 17 April – Sydney

Tibetan Monks Sand Mandala

These events will include Sand Mandala creation, chanting meditation, Buddhist Philosophy and Tibetan handicrafts.

Details: 12-16 April 10.00am-5.00pm, 17 April 1.30pm-4.00pm; Avalon Recreation Centre, Old Barrenjoey Road, Avalon; enquiries 0437 531 240.

Friday 15 April – Sydney

Political Charity? The Impact of the AidWatch case

A Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre and AidWatch Forum to debate a recent High Court ruling that charities can have a political purpose.

Details: 9.00am-2.00pm; Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics School of the Arts, 280 Pitt St near Town Hall; registration is free but please email ccs@uts.edu.au for a place.

Friday 15 April – Brisbane

Love City Hall Concert

Queensland Multicultural Inc. presents this fundraiser for Brisbane City Hall Renovation. The event will feature 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; RNA Coffee Club, Gregory Terrace, Bowen Hills, Brisbane; tickets \$50, \$70 or \$100; for more info contact Dr Bui 0414 738093 or Wayne Ko on 0412 046 201.

Saturday 16 April – Sydney

Burma-Tibetan Friendship night

A fund-raising event to raise money for Burmese refugees living in Delhi to be able to visit Tibetan activists in Dharamsala. The event will include dinner, a screening of the film 'This Prison Where I Live' and a Q&A session.

Details: from 6.00pm; 90 Bangaroo Street, North Balgowlah; bookings essential; RSVP by 10 April to Kerry Wright 0438 699 494 or Sophie Coles 0415 033 933.

Saturday 16 April – Brisbane

Access and Equity Consultation

This exciting event, organised by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA), is a forum for CALD communities to speak out about their experiences with government service provision, namely in the areas of employment, housing, health and family services. This is also an invaluable opportunity for those services to gain direct feedback on the benefits and weaknesses of their service. This consultation, along with others held across Australia, will form the backbone of the 2010-2011 National Access and Equity Report.

Details: 10.00am-2.00pm; lunch provided; Gumbaya Room, ECCQ House, 253 Boundary Street, West End, Brisbane, parking: ECCQ car park on Granville Street, or on-street parking; RSVP by 11 April, email jenni@fecca.org.au or ring Jenni on (02) 6282 5755.

Saturday 16 April – Toowoomba, Queensland

Establishing your Community Association: workshop for refugee and migrant community members

Issues covered include: organisational structure, unincorporated and incorporated associations, getting incorporated and management committee roles and responsibilities. The workshop is supported by the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, Mercy Family Services, Toowoomba Regional Council
Details: 11.00am-3.00pm; Mercy Family Services, Lucia Training Rooms, 104 South Street; contact David Barton (07) 4617 7600.

Monday 18 April – Sydney

Open Forum: Children in Immigration Detention Centres

A discussion about the current situation with guest speakers Professor Louise Newman AM, Ms Dianne Hiles AM and Ms Najeeba Wazefadost

Details: 5.30pm for 6.00pm; University of Western Sydney Parramatta campus, Building EB Room EB.3.33; call (02) 9678 7374 or register online at www.uws.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/activities_and_programs/rsvp

Thursday 28 April – Melbourne

Cross Cultural Awareness Training: Communication and Dialogue

This training session will focus on dialogue-based strategies in the areas of: non-verbal communication, language and discourse analysis, knowledge, perspectives and world view, multiculturalism and democracy and intention in communication

Details: \$260 + GST per person includes lunch and materials; Independent Schools Victoria Training Facilities; 40 Rosslyn Street, West Melbourne; for more information contact Erfan Daliri 0401 387 874 or tabarsimd@inet.net.au or www.tabarsi.com.au

From Friday 29 April – Perth

Come 'n' Try Sports Clinics for multicultural youth

A range of come 'n' try clinics for young people aged 6-10 years will be held during the school holidays at Herb Graham Recreation Centre.

Details: \$4 per session, lunch provided; contact Natalie on (08) 9205 7335 for more information and to register (bookings are essential).

Friday 6 May – Melbourne

2011 Human Rights Dinner

The Human Rights Law Centre and the Public Interest Law Clearing House have organised a Human Rights Dinner with keynote speakers Simon McKeon, 2011 Australian of the year, and Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service. There will be a silent auction, featuring pictures by renowned photographer, the late Wolfgang Sievers, signed human rights books, fine wines and other delights.

Details: 6.45pm drinks for 7.00pm start; Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1 Convention Centre Place, South Wharf (Rooms 105 & 106 Hilton South Wharf entrance); RSVP 27 April 2011; tickets \$140 full price, \$80 subsidised; dress code lounge/cocktail; email rsvphumanrights@pilch.org.au or call Toni Hynes (03) 8636 4459

Friday 6 May – Sydney

Accidental Counsellors: Skills for working with refugee survivors of torture and trauma

This one-day workshop has been designed to give workers not trained as counsellors some basic tips and skills for how to deal with difficult behaviours in trauma clients in the workplace. It will give you practical skills in dealing with situations such as: disclosure of traumatic stories, tearfulness, anger outbursts and suicide threats.

Details: \$149 per person, \$99 for students; 9.30am-4.30pm; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar NSW; for more information contact Jacqueline Donoso on (02) 9794 1900 or Jacqueline.Donoso@sswhs.nsw.gov.au, or visit www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=396

Friday 6 & Saturday 7 May – Sydney

No disrespect: Say no in plural to the “say no to burqas” mural

This exhibition, hosted by Muslim Youth of Sydney, Justice and Arts Network and Cross Border Collective, aims to create opposition and alternatives to the “say no to burqas” mural in Newtown. The opening night on 6 May will feature music and performances including spoken word artist Rima aka Soul Beats. The event on 7 May will include a panel discussion on race, difference, feminism and the burqa plus a performance by Fear of a Brown Planet.

Details: 6 May from 6.00pm; 7 May from 2.00pm; Newtown Neighbourhood Centre; for more information e-mail crossborder.sydney@gmail.com or call Najiyah on 0431 722 910.

Saturday 7 May – Sydney

Confronting 21st Century Inequalities: Towards more just schools and social services

This symposium will be of immense interest to those working in all levels of education, social work, juvenile justice, community development and youth work. Opening address by the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, keynote speakers: Raewyn Connell, Ross Homel AO and Peter Freebody.

Details: \$240 per person incl. GST and morning tea, lunch and closing drinks, group discounts available; for full program details go to

www.sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning

Monday 9 May to Sunday 15 May

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism in Australia, and provides an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers in our communities and to say thank you to the more than 5 million Australians who volunteer.

Details: for further information, visit

www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/default.asp?nav_top_id=55&nav_cat_id=357

Friday 20 May – Sydney

Asylum Seekers Centre Quiz night

More details will be announced soon but please save the date!

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Report on refugee young people and homelessness

This report from the Centre for Multicultural Youth highlights the circumstances of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds that make them particularly vulnerable to homelessness. It explores changes required at the resource and service provision levels and makes a series of recommendations for a way forward. The report can be downloaded at

www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1631/1/FindinghomeinVictoria.pdf

Report of Centre for Multicultural Youth’s pARTicipation forum

On 16 November 2010, the Centre for Multicultural Youth staged the pARTicipation Forum, a dynamic exploration of community arts and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The forum fostered a partnership approach and an acknowledgement of young people as experts of their own experience. Through an exciting combination of critical discussion and show-casing of arts projects ninety five participants explored a range of thought provoking issues. A report of the event is available at

www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1627/1/pARTicipationForumReport2010.pdf

Guide to Migrant Statistical Sources

This Guide to Migrant Statistical Sources, compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), provides a ready reference to sources of statistical information either directly related to migrants and ethnicity or which collect migrant or ethnicity related data items. The guide contains both ABS and non-ABS collections which include government, academic and private sources. The guide is available at

www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3414.0?OpenDocument

Freedom of religion and belief in 21st century Australia

Prepared for the Australian Human Rights Commission, this report aimed to research and document the views and concerns of religious and non-religious communities in Australia on issues relating to

freedom of religion and belief. The report found that there is a need to develop appropriate responses to the unique and varied Australian religious contexts and settings, including ancient Indigenous traditions, Christian heritages, and minority faith communities. It also stressed that there is a pressing need for education about religions to reduce ignorance and fear while promoting intergroup respect, citing reports of hostility, prejudice and discrimination against Muslims and other religious minorities. The report is available at www.humanrights.gov.au/frb/report/index.html

Radio plays on domestic violence

The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association has developed three new radio plays about domestic violence in Arabic, Dari, Dinka, Krio, Mandarin, Somali, and Sudanese Arabic. The plays are available as a pack of nine languages or in single language packs. For more information, visit speakouradio.wordpress.com

Free online courses for health professionals in violence prevention and peace building

Medical Peace Work offers seven free interactive courses to educate health professionals about the impact of war and other forms of violence on the health of individuals and populations, and to show how they can make a positive and particular contribution to peace building, violence prevention and conflict transformation. For further information, visit www.medicalpeacework.org

Latest version of Beginning a Life in Australia booklet now available

The Beginning a Life in Australia booklet, published by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, welcomes newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants to Australia. It provides national, state/territory and local settlement information for migrants, humanitarian entrants, their sponsors and service providers. This information is available to download in English and 37 community languages at www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/beginning-life

Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project

The Anti-Racism Research Project, based at the University of Western Sydney, examines the perspectives of everyday Australians on the issues of racism, ethnic relations and cultural diversity. The project's website presents findings from twelve years of in-depth study and comprehensive surveys of more than 12,500 Australians on attitudes towards racism, ethnic relations and cultural diversity resulting from. It also includes links to publications and information on anti-racism initiatives. The website is at www.uws.edu.au/social_sciences/soss/research/challenging_racism

Information on government responses to boat arrivals

FlagPost, the blog of the Australian Parliamentary Library, recently posted an entry outlining the similarities and differences in the approaches of the Australian Labor Party and Coalition to unauthorised boat arrivals. It also includes links to other key Parliamentary Library publications on refugee and asylum seeker issues. The blog can be read at parliamentflagpost.blogspot.com/2011/03/responding-to-boat-arrivals.html

Resources on complementary protection

The Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales has compiled a reference list of resources on complementary protection. It includes links to legislation, UN General Comments, case law, books, reports, articles and commentary. The resources list is available at www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/node/2983

Papers from Salvos Legal Lecture series available online

Copies of the papers and Powerpoint presentations delivered as part of the Salvation Army's legal lecture series are now available online. The 2011 lecture series, held in March, included a presentation on effective applications for judicial review in appeals from the Migration and Refugee Review Tribunals. The papers and presentations are available at salvos.org.au/salvoslegal/2011-lecture-series/past-lecture-series-papers

JRS Asia Pacific launches new website

Jesuit Refugee Services' Asia Pacific office has launched a new website, which will enable viewers can keep up to date with JRS' work in various projects in eight countries, read press releases and statements by JRS Asia Pacific on various issues related to refugees, displaced persons and migrants,

and have the opportunity to donate to specific projects, countries or the regional office. Visit the website at www.jrsap.org

New reports on security situation in Afghanistan

The 2010 Annual Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, prepared by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, has revealed that civilian casualties in Afghanistan continue to rise. There were 2,777 conflict-related civilian deaths, representing a 15 per cent increase compared to 2009. Conflict-related injuries of civilians increased by 22 per cent, with 4,343 injuries recorded. Child casualties increased by 21 per cent, with 372 children killed during the year. A recent report to the UN Security Council also highlighted the volatility of the security situation in Afghanistan, noting that 1,664 security incidents were recorded in January 2011 alone. The UNAMA report can be downloaded at unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf. The Security Council Report can be downloaded at www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep11.htm

Report of third Asia-Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights

The third Asia-Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25 to 27 November 2011. The Consultation brought together members of the Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) to discuss key challenges in refugee protection across the region and exchange ideas. The report of the consultation is available at refugeerightsasiapacific.org/pdf/apcrr3-final-small.pdf

OPPORTUNITIES

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 karensqp@thhpmrc.org.au or (02) 9687 9901.

Applications invited for Social Leadership Development Program

This is a 12-month program run by the Centre for Civil Society for people in communities around Australia who want to develop and exercise social leadership, that is, leadership in strengthening society and in finding solutions to social challenges. The program runs from 1 May 2011 to 30 April 2012. For more information contact Vern Hughes vern@civilsociety.org.au or (03) 5629 8400 or 0425 722 890.

Heartlands Refugee Art Prize: call for entries

Following on from the success of last year's inaugural New Heartlands Refugee Art Prize, Multicultural Arts Victoria and AMES are again collaborating in 2011 for the Heartlands Refugee Art Prize. The Prize celebrates the contribution of refugee artists who have arrived in Australia since 1970. There is a total prize pool of over \$15,000 in cash and prizes. For more information, contact Naomi Ota or Jorge Leiva on (03) 9417 6777. *Applications close 6 May 2011.*

Call for participants: Strangers in a Strange Land

Strangers in a Strange Land is a photographic portraiture project that aims to describe contemporary Australians in the context of the immigration process. Through portraits, factual narratives and audio testimonies, the project aims to not only celebrate the diversity of today's Australian communities, but also to highlight how we share common or similar stories despite our various places of origin. The project is calling for participants to share their (or their ancestors') stories of coming to Australia. For more information contact Robert on 0431 779 191 or go.robt@gmail.com, or visit www.robert-go.com

AMRAP Ethnic and Multicultural Music Initiative

The Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (AMRAP) is a Commonwealth Government-funded community radio initiative that distributes contemporary Australian music to Australian community radio stations. To ensure that it is representative of diverse Australian musicians, AMRAP is inviting culturally diverse

musicians – especially from new and emerging communities – to apply to have their music added to Airtl, an Australian music catalogue exclusively available to Australian community radio stations. For further details and to apply, visit www.amrap.com.au/emapply.html. For more information, contact Anthea Sidiropoulos at em@amrap.org.au or the the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council on (03) 9486 9549.

Call for non-English speaking actors

Actors from non-English speaking backgrounds are sought to build an interactive resource about communication in hospital Emergency Departments. The resource aims to prepare medical and nursing students for the particular communication demands of the Emergency Department. Contact Susy Macqueen (03) 8344 4886 susym@unimelb.edu.au or Robyn Woodward-Kron (03) 8344 3072 robynwk@unimelb.edu.au.

PLURAL+ 2011 Youth Video Festival: call for entries

PLURAL+ is a youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion, coordinated by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). Young people aged nine to 25 are invited to submit dynamic and forward-thinking videos focusing on these issues. Further information, including guidelines, regulations, awards, and the entry form can be found at the PLURAL+ website: www.unaoc.org/pluralplus. *The deadline for video submission is July 1 2011.*

Applications open for UNHCR Small Grants Programme

UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) is offering small grants to encourage and enable original research and writing to be undertaken on refugee, displacement, migration and humanitarian issues and situations that are closely related to UNHCR's mandate and operational activities. The maximum amount payable under this programme is \$7,500 for projects that can be completed within a maximum of six months and which result in the preparation of a 20-40 page paper that can be published in the PDES working paper series, "New Issues in Refugee Research". To apply for a grant under this programme, please submit (1) a one-page project proposal, (2) an indicative budget, (3) a CV and (4) a writing sample, to hqpd00@unhcr.org, with "Small grant" in the subject line. Applications that do not conform to this format will not be considered. *Applications close 31 May 2011.*

Call for manuscripts: Journal of Multicultural Society

The Sookmyung Institute for Multicultural Studies invites manuscripts for the second issue of OMNES: The Journal of Multicultural Society. OMNES welcomes manuscripts that deal with themes concerning the global movement of people, human security related to migration, multicultural society, cultural diversity, social integration and other relevant topics. If you wish to submit a manuscript, please send the title or a one-paragraph outline to omnes@sm.ac.kr. For further information, visit or www.omnesjournal.org. *The deadline for submissions is 20 May 2011.*

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)

PM seeks to exploit Coalition in House of Reps vote

The Gillard government will try to expose Coalition divisions on the treatment of asylum seekers by refusing to excuse Liberal moderates from voting on an opposition motion calling for fewer boat people to be accepted as refugees. Liberal moderates Judi Moylan and Russell Broadbent have signalled they will oppose the bill, which calls for a 3,750 cap on refugee visas for unauthorised boat people, with a further 10,000 visas going to asylum seekers from overseas camps. Ms Moylan spoke out strongly against the motion in parliament, saying it risked leaving boat people in Australian centres in indefinite detention. "The fact is that once an asylum-seeker reaches our shores we have a legal, social and moral obligation to assess the claim and then provide asylum," she said. (The Australian, 1 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/prime-minister-seeks-to-exploit-coalition-in-house-of-representatives-vote/story-fn59niix-1226014158784

ASIO delays assessment of 900 asylum seekers

ASIO is under pressure to explain why 900 asylum seekers accepted as refugees by the Immigration Department are stuck in detention centres waiting for security checks to be completed. The group

makes up more than 13 per cent of Australia's total asylum seeker population and the security delays are being blamed for overcrowding inside detention centres and millions of dollars in extra costs. (ABC Lateline, 1 March) www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2011/s3152416.htm

Darwin to become asylum detention capital

Darwin is set to replace Christmas Island as Australia's central place for housing asylum seekers. Plans have been announced to add 1,900 new beds to the Northern Territory capital. This will take Darwin's immigration detention capacity to 2,900, eclipsing Christmas Island's ability to hold 2,600. A spokesman for Mr Bowen said that while Darwin's capacity would increase, there was no timeframe for the expansion. Opposition immigration spokesman Scott Morrison said the government was embarking on a detention bed binge. The Refugee Council of Australia said that while detention in Darwin was preferable to Christmas Island, it was disappointed that mandatory detention was continuing. "We think it's a missed opportunity," spokeswoman Sophie Peer said. "The government needs to be looking for alternatives, not beds." (Sydney Morning Herald, 4 March)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/darwin-to-become-asylum-detention-capital-20110303-1bg7i.html

Inverbrackie's troubled children in court plea

An Iranian boy and girl have asked a court to release them from the Inverbrackie Detention Centre. The siblings, a girl aged three and a boy aged eight, say they will not recover from "nightmares" about their boat trip to Australia unless they are released from government custody. Their Federal Court action, filed by their parents, is the first claim levelled against Inverbrackie since it opened in December. (Adelaide Advertiser, 8 March)

www.adelaidenow.com.au/ipad/inverbrackies-troubled-children-in-court-plea/story-fn6bqphm-1226017324064

Average processing time double that of government target

The average time spent processing refugee claims has blown out to 165 days - nearly twice the government's 90-day target. And the average time spent in detention for all unauthorised arrivals - including those whose claims have been rejected - stands at 213 days. In just over two years, 3438 visas have been granted to boat people with the majority coming from Afghanistan. Since 2008, only 190 asylum seekers had been removed from Australia including 15 who were removed involuntarily. The department said the longest time in detention for a current detainee was almost three years. (The Australian, 8 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/average-processing-time-double-that-of-government-target/story-fn59niix-1226016983643

Timor solution a 'terrible idea'

Australia's plans to set up a regional refugee processing centre in East Timor have suffered another blow after a senior Indonesian political adviser described the policy as a "terrible idea". Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a top aide accompanying Indonesian Vice-President Boediono in Perth this week, said the plan would create a lot of security and socio-economic problems for Indonesia. "East Nusa Tenggara (Indonesian West Timor) has refugees from East Timor still staying in camps." Dr Dewi Fortuna said. (West Australian, 11 March)

au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/8989921/timor-solution-a-terrible-idea/

Mine-site conditions for Northam detainees

Asylum seekers sent to the Northam detention centre will initially live without mains power and water - and sewage from the site will be pumped on to trucks and taken to Perth for disposal. But the department has defended the proposal, saying it was common practice. A briefing note from the department outlines its aim to have the first 500 asylum seekers in Northam by June or July. They will be living in second-hand dongas, which will be bought from mine sites and refurbished. (West Australian, 11 March)

au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/wa/8989919/mine-site-conditions-for-northam-detainees/

Asylum seeker boat stopped near Broome

A boatload of suspected asylum seekers has been intercepted near Broome off Western Australia's Kimberley Coast, Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor says. "The group will be transferred to Christmas Island where they will undergo security, identity and health checks and their reasons for travel will be established," he said. (Herald Sun, 12 March)

www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/asylum-seeker-boat-stopped-near-broome/story-e6frf7jx-1226020324564

Asylum seekers escape from Christmas Island, 50 return

At least 150 asylum-seekers escaped from Christmas Island's high-security detention centre early today and 100 are refusing to return. The mass breakout of mainly Iranian and Iraqi men has left the centre's security guards and Australian Federal Police officers scrambling to try and regain order. Some of the male escapees reportedly walked up to 12km, and a number reached the island's airport. About 2,000 single men are detained in the overcrowded centre, and there are 2,539 asylum seekers across the island. (The Australian, 12 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/asylum-seekers-escape-centre-some-return/story-e6frg6nf-1226020284557

Probe launched into detention centre breakouts on Christmas Island

The federal government will take action against detention centre service provider Serco if it has breached any part of its contract following two breakouts at Christmas Island. A small group of detainees escaped the Christmas Island Detention Centre last night, just hours after about 200 asylum-seekers returned having previously broken out of the complex. (Perth Now, 14 March)

www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/probe-launched-into-detention-centre-breakouts-on-christmas-island/story-e6frg13u-1226020906541

Teargas used on Christmas Island protestors

Australian police have used tear gas against more than 200 asylum seekers at the Christmas Island holding centre. Christmas Island, off the northwest coast of Western Australia, is home to more than 2,500 asylum seekers awaiting assessment on their cases. Police were concerned "that the particular protest action had the capacity to turn more violent and they took the decision on the ground as an operational matter that that was the appropriate response," Mr Bowen said of the police decision to use tear gas. One detainee was taken to hospital with a suspected broken leg. Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said the detention system was "in crisis". (BBC, 14 March)

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12732446

Anh Do wins Indie Book of the Year Award

Comedian Anh Do's memoir "The Happiest Refugee" has won the Indie Book of the Year Award for 2011. Do, whose debut work was published in September last year, says he was overcome with emotion when his name was announced. "The Happiest Refugee was chosen by an overwhelming number of independent booksellers as their book of the year," says Leading Edge Books general manager and awards organiser Simon Milne. (AAP, 14 March)

news.ninensn.com.au/entertainment/8223841/anh-do-wins-indie-book-of-the-year-award

Asylum seekers on detention centre roof

A group of asylum seekers has climbed on to the roof of a Darwin detention centre, an Immigration Department spokesman has confirmed. The private security firm that guards Australia's detention centres, Serco, is negotiating with a group of Burmese asylum seekers at the Northern Immigration Detention Centre in an effort to talk them in out of the rain. A spokesman for the immigration department told AAP Serco was closely monitoring the group. "Such action as this will have no bearing on their asylum applications." Medical services are on hand should they be required. "Their safety is our primary concern." (Sydney Morning Herald, 15 March)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/asylum-seekers-on-detention-centre-roof-20110315-1bw2h.html

Federal police fire 'beanbag' rounds

Federal police have confirmed they shot "beanbag" rounds at Christmas Island detainees to quell protests. Officers used the "non-lethal force" after Immigration Department officials and security staff called for Australian Federal Police help to manage Sunday night's protest involving 300 detainees. An AFP spokesman said officers were able to choose from a "suite of less lethal munitions options". (Sydney Morning Herald, 16 March)

www.smh.com.au/national/federal-police-fire-beanbag-rounds-20110315-1bvzg.html

Outrage over 'beanbag' rounds fired at detainees

Refugee and human rights groups have expressed alarm that police opened fire with "beanbag" rounds on asylum seekers on Christmas Island, saying it is the first time the firearm has been used in Australian immigration detention. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has urged restraint, and its regional representative, Richard Towle, said the incident highlighted rising tension in remote detention centres amid long processing delays. The Refugee Council of Australia's chief

executive, Paul Power, said he could never have imagined the situation would come to this under a Labor government - tear gas and shootings. (Sydney Morning Herald, 17 March)

www.smh.com.au/national/outrage-over-beanbag-rounds-fired-at-detainees-20110316-1bxc6.html

Most of group resettled

Almost 18 months after they were promised resettlement, 10 Sri Lankan refugees who were rescued while seeking asylum in Australia and who spent more than a year in a Romanian transit centre will begin new lives in the Netherlands. The 10 were among 78 Sri Lankan Tamils rescued by the Oceanic Viking in October 2009 and persuaded to leave the ship after a month-long standoff by the promise of prompt resettlement. All of the group were found to be refugees and all but six have now been resettled - 22 in Australia and 50 in other countries. The six received adverse security assessments by ASIO and remain in detention while the government seeks third countries that will take them. (The Age, 17 March)

www.theage.com.au/national/most-of-group-resettled-20110316-1bxas.html

ASIO deal to shift refugees fast

The federal government has done a deal with ASIO to clear a backlog of about 900 asylum-seekers by the end of next month, as authorities on Christmas Island continue to struggle to control rioters who have given negotiators six demands. So far, the Immigration Department has met one of the rioters' demands by promising that the 900-odd detainees found to be refugees but waiting for security checks from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation would have an answer about their futures within six weeks. Some have waited 18 months. ASIO and Immigration were working in a "co-located" arrangement to "ensure more efficient processing of cases where this can reasonably be done". (The Australian, 18 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/asio-deal-to-shift-refugees-fast/story-fn59niix-1226023546259

Detention unrest spreads to Curtin

There has been a protest among asylum seekers at the Curtin Immigration Detention Centre near Derby in Western Australia's Kimberley region. The Immigration Department says 100 people gathered in a common area of the centre for the non-violent protest. In January, detainees at the Curtin facility engaged in a fortnight-long hunger strike and there were reports some had to be hospitalised. (ABC, 18 March) www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/03/17/3166875.htm

Government threatens to revoke rioting refugees' visas

The Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, has warned that 200 asylum seekers involved in violent protests on Christmas Island may have their visas revoked or blocked on character grounds, even if it had already been found they were genuine refugees. The tough line came as another 70 Australian Federal Police officers were dispatched to the remote island, bringing total police numbers to 188, after two administration buildings and seven tents were burnt down in angry clashes. A refugee advocate, Pamela Curr, said the protests had been sparked by a decision by Serco to lock down roller doors between different parts of the centre last Friday to prevent movement because of a lack of staff. (Sydney Morning Herald, 19 March)

www.smh.com.au/national/government-threatens-to-revoke-rioting-refugees-visas-20110318-1c0lg.html

Afghan who hanged himself was 'under pressure to go back'

An Afghan asylum-seeker who apparently hanged himself with a bedsheet at a remote detention centre on Cape York had recently had his refugee application rejected, refugee advocates say. The Hazara man was found dead at Scherger detention centre near Weipa, 2,400km north of Brisbane, on Thursday night. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship confirmed the man had arrived by boat, but would not release any further details about his identity or confirm how he had died, until his family had been informed. (The Australian, 19 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/afghan-who-hanged-himself-was-under-pressure-to-go-back/story-e6frg6nf-1226024319225

Christmas Island centre scaled down after riots

The Christmas Island detention centre will be significantly scaled down as a result of last week's violent protests, as the government continues to be lashed by local residents who say they warned of the consequences of overcrowding at the facility. Two RAAF Hercules delivered more teargas, ammunition and about 80 police to the island over the weekend, bringing the number of AFP officers to nearly 200, in a show of force designed to make the last of the troublemakers at the detention centre back down.

As the Immigration Department yesterday told island residents capacity at the facility would be downgraded, up to 20 asylum-seekers who escaped from the centre last week were still at large in the surrounding jungle. (The Australian, 21 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/christmas-island-centre-scaled-down-after-riots/story-fn59niix-1226025068711

Christmas Island asylum centre at risk: former manager

The former manager of the Christmas Island detention centre wrote to his boss at Serco five months before last week's riots, urging the company to hire more staff to tackle security and safety failures at the overcrowded facility. The staffing proposal document written last October by then centre manager, Ray Wiley, urged Serco, which operates all the detention centres, to hire more personnel and "provide proactive intervention rather than reactive damage control". (The Australian, 22 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/asylum-centre-at-risk-manager/story-fn59niix-1226025709520

Informal talks with detainees raise legal alarm

Legal and refugee groups have expressed concern that Christmas Island detainees being questioned by police over last week's riots are not getting legal representation. Amid mounting political pressure for criminal charges to be laid, lawyers warned that a court threw out evidence against Sri Lankan asylum seekers charged over riots in 2009 because they had not taken legal advice before giving statements to police. There are no lawyers on Christmas Island, and yesterday two detainees charged with escaping were unable to be formally interviewed by police because the West Australian Legal Aid office could not provide a lawyer. (WA Today, 24 March)

www.watoday.com.au/national/informal-talks-with-detainees-raise-legal-alarm-20110323-1c6ul.html

We have a duty not to return asylum seekers to harm

This week, through the reintroduction to parliament of the Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Bill 2011, Australia takes an important step forward in bringing our law into line with our international obligations and practice in countries such as New Zealand, the US, Canada and the European Union. The new bill will put refugee and "complementary protection" assessments together, at the front of the asylum process, allowing officials to immediately examine the risks faced by an individual if returned home. This will save time and money, and will alleviate the human suffering associated with lengthy periods in detention. (Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March)

www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/we-have-a-duty-not-to-return-asylum-seekers-to-harm-20110324-1c7qd.html

Afghans to be deported after bids rejected

Dozens of failed Afghan asylum-seekers are facing deportation after the federal government persuaded authorities in Kabul to agree to their forced repatriation, despite fears for their safety. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen said his department was finalising plans to return a "small caseload" of about 50 people whose claims for refugee status had been rejected. The chief executive of the Refugee Council of Australia, Paul Power, says the council has received expert advice that it is still dangerous for ethnic Hazaras to be returned to Afghanistan. He said the council was concerned a UNHCR offer to undertake "ad hoc monitoring" of returnees would not be sufficient to guarantee their safety. (The Australian, 25 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/afghans-to-be-deported-after-bids-rejected/story-fn59niix-1226027701488

Remote beach drop off strips legal rights

A large group of asylum-seekers who were taken to the Australian mainland for processing rather than strife-torn Christmas Island briefly disembarked on a remote beach on Ashmore Reef, a move that ensured they could still be processed as "offshore" asylum-seekers. In what the opposition labelled a cover-up, the asylum seekers, who were intercepted by Customs last week, now have fewer appeal rights after they were forced to get off the Customs vessel Triton at West Island, on Ashmore Reef. Under the Migration Act, asylum-seekers who arrive in a place excised from the migration zone are considered "offshore" entrants. (The Australian, 25 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/remote-beach-drop-off-strips-asylum-seekers-legal-rights/story-fn59niix-1226027726103

Asylum claims in Australia up, but still only 2 per cent of global total

The United Nations says the number of asylum claims being made in Australia rose by about a third in 2010 compared to the previous year. But the annual figures from the UN refugee agency also show that Australia continues to take only a fraction of the total number of people across the world who are fleeing harm and persecution in their home countries. The Government says the figures reflect the

complex nature of the issue. But the Opposition says they're further proof that the Government's border protection policies are failing. (ABC, 28 March) www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2011/s3175937.htm

Another asylum seeker dies in detention

An Afghan man who died at a West Australian detention centre is the fourth asylum seeker to take their own life at a detention centre in the last seven months, refugee advocates say. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) says the man, understood to be in his 20s, was found dead in his accommodation block at the Curtin Immigration Detention Centre near Derby shortly after 3pm (WST) yesterday. (The Australian, 29 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/another-asylum-seeker-dies-in-detention/story-fn3dxity-1226029810682

Timor refugee centre off agenda at Bali talks

Australia's plan for a regional processing centre for asylum seekers in East Timor will not be discussed at a crucial meeting on people smuggling in Bali today. Australia said the plan, which key East Timorese officials oppose, would be discussed at the meeting in Bali. (ABC Online, 30 March)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/03/30/3177342.htm

Detention centres to be reviewed

The Immigration Department has agreed to establish an independent review of the provision of mental health services in detention centres after the fifth suicide by an asylum seeker in seven months, amid calls for a radical overhaul of the entire system. The review was requested after the third suicide and will be chaired by an outside expert, according to Louise Newman, the psychiatrist who chairs the government's detention health advisory group. Her predecessor, Professor Harry Minas, described the situation across the detention network as untenable, saying the recent suicides and sharp escalation in acts of self-harm were "entirely predictable". (The Age, 30 March)

www.theage.com.au/national/detention-centres-to-be-reviewed-20110329-1cesp.html

'Stop deporting Afghans'

Australia's leading authority on Afghanistan has called for a moratorium on the deportation of failed Afghan asylum-seekers. The call came with the warning that they faced the risk of persecution or death if forced to return to their homeland. The warning from William Maley, director of the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University, is supported by research showing that at least nine Afghans deported when their asylum claims were rejected were killed after being forced to return to war-torn Afghanistan. Professor Maley says the Gillard government's plan to repatriate a group of about 50 Afghans in coming months will put them in grave danger. (The Australian, 30 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/stop-deporting-afghans/story-fn59niix-1226030327677

Bali summit falls short of real deal

Asylum seekers should be treated fairly and processed swiftly under a regional set of laws across the Asia-Pacific, regional leaders agreed yesterday. Their historic document - signed at the Bali Process summit - is the first regional agreement of its kind and Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd said it was "a significant win for Australian democracy". But the deal is scant on specifics, non-binding on the countries involved and is a severely watered down version of the proposal Australia took to the table. (West Australian, 31 March)

au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/national/9104739/bali-summit-falls-short-of-real-deal/

No surveillance for Australia's fatal shore

The man who oversees the country's maritime security has painted a disturbing picture of how Australia patrols its northern borders. He admitted there was no working surveillance system when a ramshackle fishing boat smashed into Christmas Island last December, killing about 50 asylum seekers. Grilled yesterday by West Australian Coroner Alastair Hope at an inquest into the deaths, Rear-Admiral Tim Barrett, head of Border Protection Command, was also forced to disclose that on a day-to-day basis he did not know if Australia's long-distance, over-the-horizon radar surveillance system was operating. (The Australian, 31 March)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/no-surveillance-for-our-fatal-shore/story-e6frg6nf-1226031000450