



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

12 May 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

If you no longer wish to receive this bulletin, please email unsubscribe@refugeecouncil.org.au

NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Malaysia's appalling rights record ignored in refugee transfer deal

RCOA has expressed its concern about the Australian Government ignoring Malaysia's record of mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees in its rush to seal an asylum seeker transfer deal. The transfer deal, announced by the Australian and Malaysian Governments on Sunday, will see 800 asylum seekers who enter Australia by boat sent to Malaysia in return for Australia resettling 4,000 additional refugees from Malaysia over the next four years. Malaysia has not signed the Refugee Convention and has a long record of abuse and mistreatment of people seeking protection, including arbitrary arrest, detention and caning of asylum seekers. RCOA has strongly advocated for the development of a more effective regional framework to better address the protection needs of refugee applauded the Australian Government's efforts to advance this through the Bali Process. However, rather than working patiently to build policies which ensure the protection of the vulnerable, Australia has rushed for domestic political reasons into a bilateral agreement which will see it linked to some of the most inhumane refugee policies in Asia. The increase in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 14,750 places will lift it to its highest level in 16 years. However, it is deeply disappointing to see what would otherwise be welcomed as a very positive step occur under these conditions. RCOA's media release on the transfer deal is at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110507_Malaysia_transfer.pdf

Federal Budget highlights blowout in detention costs

RCOA's summary of measures in the Federal Budget highlights massive increases in the costs of Australia's detention network and its management of asylum seekers arriving by boat. Immigration detention will cost more than \$800 million in 2011-12. The Government is planning to spend \$1.058 billion on its Offshore Asylum Seeker Management program, most of it on implementing the mandatory detention policy. The allocation to this program has tripled in two years. Other Budget measures include the increase in the Refugee Program (1000 places tied to the Malaysia transfer deal), modest increases in funding of settlement support and a raft of new border security measures. RCOA's summary of the Federal Budget is at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/budget/2011-12_Budget_brief.pdf

Government plans reopening of Pacific Solution detention centre

The Australian Government has confirmed news reports that it is negotiating with the Government of Papua New Guinea to reopen a detention centre on Manus Island. RCOA believes that the reintroduction of extra-territorial processing of asylum seekers would result in a re-emergence of the many problems which the current Government rightly criticised in the Pacific Solution, leaving people found to be in need of protection from persecution waiting indefinitely in remote detention while the Australian Government attempts to find other countries willing to take them. The plan would undermine Australia's efforts to encourage its neighbours to take refugee protection more seriously and to engage refugee resettlement states in working together to share responsibility for other refugee needs in the region. RCOA's media release on the plan is at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110506_Manus.pdf

Opposition turns settlement research into attack on refugee arrivals

While all involved in refugee policy in Australia have become somewhat inured to divisive political debate, we at RCOA found ourselves shocked by the Federal Opposition's wilful distortion of the findings of a report on the settlement of new arrivals. The Settlement of New Arrivals report draws together findings of voluntary surveys from 5,378 refugee and humanitarian entrants who have arrived in Australia in the past five years. It shows that, at the time of completing the survey, 36.5% were employed or in business for themselves, 14.6% were unemployed and 46.7% were studying (a quarter of them also employed), with others caring for family or retired. This report shows that the first five years in Australia is a period of rebuilding and transition, in which refugee and humanitarian entrants spend time learning English, improving their skills and seeking entry to the Australian workforce. The Opposition's statement on the report reads like a parody of demonising political rhetoric about refugees, inviting the Australian public to fear "a toxic social cocktail" of welfare dependency, entitlement, enclaves and intergenerational social problems, all manipulated by people smugglers. RCOA's response to the Opposition's statement is at

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110505_SONA.pdf. The Settlement of New Arrivals report can be downloaded at

www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/pdf/settlement-outcomes-new-arrivals.pdf

Scrutiny of detention welcomed

RCOA has welcomed the Commonwealth Ombudsman's announcement to use his 'own motion' powers to investigate the use of force against asylum seekers on Christmas Island last month. At the time RCOA expressed deep concern over the use of weapons and questioned how the situation at the North West Point detention centre was being handled. RCOA hopes that this upcoming investigation will present the Government with alternative approaches which will avoid further tension and individual suffering in detention. RCOA's media release on the announcement is at

www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110414_Omb_CI.pdf. The Ombudsman's release can be viewed at www.ombudsman.gov.au/media-releases/show/175

Increase in long-term detention at heart of unrest

As Australia pondered the causes and implications of the destructive protests in Villawood and Christmas Island, RCOA drew attention to the fact that the Australian Government's asylum policies have resulted in a 1400% increase in long-term detention in just one year. While the overall number of immigration detainees grew by 196%, those detained for longer than six months grew seven times faster - from 258 in March 2010 to 3,901 in March 2011. The Government has been repeatedly warned by its advisory bodies, mental health specialists and refugee organisations that an increase in long-term detention would result in more incidents of self-harm and increased unrest in detention centres. RCOA has again urged the Government to examine alternative policies, such as those employed by nations including Sweden, Canada, South Africa, Belgium and the United States, which see asylum seekers being released to live in the community after a short, defined period of detention for health, security and identity checks.

Government announces changes to character test for asylum seekers in detention

The Australian Government responded to unrest at Villawood and Christmas Island detention centres by announcing a series of planned changes to the Migration Act. Under the proposed changes, a person convicted of any offence committed while in immigration detention will fail the character test; and the maximum penalty for the manufacture, possession, use or distribution of weapons by immigration detainees will increase from three to five years' imprisonment. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen also indicated that he intends to use the full extent of his powers to prevent individuals who have been involved in criminal, violent or destructive behaviour from being allowed to apply for a permanent protection visa. Instead, these individuals may be granted temporary visas which do not permit family reunion. RCOA fears that the changes could result in a refugee who commits one misdemeanour or minor offence while in the pressure cooker environment of long-term detention being denied protection and unity with his or her family for life. RCOA's media release on the changes can be viewed at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/110427_MigAct_changes.pdf

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. 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. **The deadline for submissions is Friday 13 May 2011.** For further details, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/unhcr.html

Refugee Week 2011: posters, resources and event registration

RCOA is delighted that the 2011 Refugee Week poster has been designed by Shaun Tan, one of Australia's most talented artists. Shaun is a Melbourne-based freelance artist and author best known for his award-winning picture books such as *The Rabbits*, *The Lost Thing*, *The Arrival* and *Tales from Outer Suburbia*. Shaun recently won the Academy Award for Best Short Animated Film for *The Lost Thing* (adapted from his picture book of the same title) and the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. Information about how to pick up copies of the poster is on the new Refugee Week website at www.refugeeweek.org.au/resources/poster.php.

The 2011 Refugee Week Resource Kit contains background information about refugees, a guide to organising events, responses to common myths about refugees and asylum seekers and an extensive list of websites, books, films, documentaries, lesson plans and online games on refugee-related issues. The Kit can be downloaded at www.refugeeweek.org.au/resources/kit.php

Registration for the 2011 Refugee Week Events Calendar is now open. You can register your event using the form at www.refugeeweek.org.au/events/register.php or send through your event flyer to info@refugeecouncil.org.au

Call for volunteers to assist with Sydney launch of Refugee Week

RCOA and Friends of STARTTS are seeking volunteers to assist us in preparing for the Sydney launch of Refugee Week, to be held at the Pitt Street Uniting Church (264 Pitt Street, Sydney) on 18 June 2011. Volunteers will be needed at the church during business hours between 14 and 17 June, to set up equipment and artworks for the Dario Palermo Refugee Art Exhibition and Refugee Film Festival and assist with other preparations for the launch. To register your interest in volunteering or for further information, please send an e-mail to info@refugeecouncil.org.au

2011 Refugee Conference: Registration for Youth Forum now open

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. Further information including key dates and registration details can be found at refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au.

As part of the conference, a Youth Forum will be held to provide a platform for young leaders from across Australia to come together to identify and discuss issues that impact the lives of refugee young people both locally and internationally. The Forum will provide participants with the opportunity to engage with human rights frameworks and participate in leadership and advocacy training to develop strategies to promote and represent the rights of refugee young people at a national and international policy level. Young people aged 12-25 from refugee and non-refugee backgrounds with an interest in human rights and refugee youth issues are strongly encouraged to attend. The Youth Forum costs \$35 and will run for one and half days from June 14 to the morning June 15. To register, go to refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au/registration.html. For further information, contact Anne-Marie Taylor, on (02) 9281 5522 ext 6 or youthforum2011.refugeeconf@gmail.com; or Effie Mitchell on (02) 9385 1961 or enquiries.refugeeconf2011@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.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers and interns!

National Volunteer Week will be celebrated from May 9 to 15. Volunteers make a vital contribution to supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. From helping newly arrived refugees to settle in their new home to advocating for fair and constructive refugee and asylum policies, volunteers are an essential part of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Members and supporters of RCOA frequently express their surprise at how much we manage to accomplish with so few paid staff members. The secret to our success is our dedicated team of volunteers and interns who assist us with all aspect of our work, including research, policy analysis, event coordination, media and administrative support. Their contributions to our organisation are invaluable and we are very grateful for their support.

Check out our new website

RCOA has launched a new-look website at www.refugeecouncil.org.au. While our main website URL has remained the same, links to other pages may have changed. RCOA delayed the release of this month's bulletin to ensure that all links to our website would be up-to-date. If you have difficulty accessing any content on the new website, please let us know through info@refugeecouncil.org.au.

Our new website provides access to a wealth of information on refugee and asylum issues, including RCOA publications, statistics, resource lists, personal stories from former refugees and responses to common myths. We have also launched sister sites for the A Just Australia campaign (www.ajustaustralia.com), Refugee Week (www.refugeeweek.org.au) and the Australian Refugee Foundation (www.refugeefoundation.org.au). RCOA would like to thank John Hardaker and Brett Enman for their assistance with developing the new website and Tim Seeto for providing IT support.

COMING EVENTS

Thursday 12 May to Friday 3 June – Adelaide

Migration and Transformation exhibition

This small survey exhibition of drawings and prints by Zambian-born artist Lauryn Arnott showcases works created from the 1980s to the present day. Her works explore issues of identity, particularly the complex position of people who arrive in Australia in order to escape from oppressive political regimes. Lauryn will deliver a floor talk about her work on the opening day of the exhibition. The exhibition will be officially opened by Keith Preston, Manager Arts and Cultural Development, Migrant Resource Centre of SA at this time.

Details: 11:00am; Axis Gallery, Parks Centre. RSVP to (08) 8243 5623.

From Thursday 12 May to Sunday 12 June – Australia wide

The Human Rights Arts and Film Festival (HRAFF)

HRAFF's mission is to make human rights accessible and engaging to everyone through creative media. This annual festival will include film screenings, forums, art exhibitions, music performances, poetry readings and theatre. The festival will be travelling to Melbourne, Canberra, Alice Springs, Brisbane, Sydney, Byron Bay and Adelaide.

Details: for further information including key dates and programs go to <http://hraff.org.au>

Friday 13 May – Sydney

North Africa protests: crises but no road map

This panel discussion will present an analysis of recent events in Egypt and Morocco in the context of North African politics and protests, and the implications for Africa's last colony, Western Sahara. The discussion will be introduced and the Q&A chaired by Hon John Dowd AO QC and feature panellists

Gennaro Gervasio, an academic specialising in modern Egyptian history and politics and international relations of the Middle East; Tara Povey from the University of Sydney's Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies; and Aicha Dahane, human rights activist and International Officer for Forum Future for Saharawi Women. Funds raised at this event will go to Australia Western Sahara Association. Details: 6:00pm for a 6:30pm start; \$10 (\$5 concession); for further information contact Kate Barton through katebarton3@optusnet.com.au

Friday 13 May – Sydney

Mother's Day Celebration hosted by the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW

This event will include the launch of a short film commemorating 100 years of International Women's Day.

Details: 5:00pm; Granville Town Hall, 10 Carlton Street, Granville; for more information call Emina on (02) 9635 8022 or for information in Dari/Farsi call Nadera Hakimi on 0415 140 202.

Saturday 14 May to Sunday 15 May – Melbourne

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Performance: Not Just My Story

Stories of persecution, family, resilience and love are explored by 30 asylum seekers through physical theatre, story telling, movement and music. Not Just My Story is a special opportunity for audiences to encounter the human face of compelling asylum seeker stories.

Details: performances at 3:00pm and 8:00pm on the 14th. 8:00pm on the 15th; St Martins Youth Arts Centre, 44 St Martins Lane, South Yarra; tickets \$40/\$30 concession; purchase tickets from www.hraff.org.au

Sunday 15 May – Sydney

Fundraising lunch with Aicha Dahane

Aicha Dahane is visiting Australia to raise awareness about Western Sahara and the abuse of human rights in the non-governing territory occupied by Morocco since 1975. Aicha will be introduced by Dr Meredith Burgmann, Labor Councillor, Sydney City Council Funds raised will go to human rights defenders in the Occupied Territory of Western Sahara.

Details: 12:30pm; 136 Louisa Road, Birchgrove; \$15 (\$10) entry with drinks available; RSVP by 13 May to Juanita juanihadges@isp.net.au or Sheree waksy1@hotmail.com or (02) 9555 7738

Monday 16 May – Melbourne

Walk for Justice to raise funds to pay for disbursements in pro bono matters

Victorian Attorney-General Robert Clark will open the Walk. The Attorney-General will be joined by Walk patrons from the judiciary, law school deans, federal and state politicians and senior members of the Victorian Bar. The Walk finishes in the forecourt of the County Court for a free breakfast and hot coffee and tea.

Details: Walk starts at 7:30am; steps of Parliament to Forecourt of County Court; \$20 for individual workers, \$10 for students, \$180 for walking group of 10 individuals; email walkforjustice@pilch.org.au for a registration form.

Tuesday 17 May – Sydney

Human Rights in Western Sahara: Africa's last colony

This seminar will be presented by Aicha Dahane, a Saharawi woman who, due to her role as a Human Rights Defender for Western Sahara and the involvement of her brother in political activism, was forced to seek political asylum in the UK in 2002. Aicha is in daily contact with her family living in occupied Western Sahara, a life she knows well and which she shared for 28 years. She is the international relations officer for the Forum Future for Saharawi Women.

Details: 1:00pm- 2:30pm; Education Seminar Room 432, Education Building, University of Sydney; for further information call (02) 9351 7686 or email arts_cpacs@sydney.edu.au

Wednesday 18 May – Melbourne

Launch of "People of Burma in Melbourne: Perspectives of a Refugee Community"

The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre invites you to the launch of this new publication on Melbourne's Burmese community. The publication will be launched by Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Kate Lundy.

Details: 10:00am; Level 1, 314 Thomas Street, Dandenong; refreshments provided; RSVP by 15 May through perlam@sermrc.org.au or (03) 9706 8933. Copies of the publication will be available at the launch for \$20 (charge is only to cover printing costs).

Wednesday 18 May – Sydney

Launch of “The Cage” by Gordon Weiss

This new book by journalist and former UN spokesperson Gordon Weiss examines the final stages of the conflict in Sri Lanka. The book will be launched by The Hon John Dowd QC.

Details: 6:00pm-8:00pm; Hollywood Hotel, 2 Forster Street, Surry Hills; RSVP to panpublicity@macmillan.com.au

Wednesday 18 May – Sydney

Human Rights Education in the Curriculum: Mapping the Future

This forum brings together leading human rights educators and advocates from the Australian Human Rights Commission, the NSW Department of Education, the NSW Board of Studies and representatives for the History Teachers and Legal Studies Associations, to add to the conversation about human rights education, its place in the curriculum at state and national levels and what progress has been made to date in establishing clear frameworks to embed human rights education in the everyday practices of teachers in schools.

Details: 4:00pm-6:00pm; Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, UTS City Campus, Level 3, Mary Ann House, 645 Harris Street, Sydney (a short walk from Central Railway Station); to register, please send name, group or organisational affiliation and e-mail address to ccs@uts.edu.au. Please RSVP as places are strictly limited.

Wednesday 18 May - Melbourne

Official opening of new Spectrum MRC and Foundation House offices in Sunshine

The new offices will be officially opened by Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

Details: 4:00pm-6:00pm; 161 Harvester Road, Sunshine; RSVP by Friday 13 May to Georgia Phillips on (03) 9389 8914 or phillipsg@foundationhouse.org.au

Friday 20 May – Sydney

‘A Night At the Movies’ - the Asylum Seekers Centre’s 9th Annual Quiz

Bring a team dressed in theme and test your trivia with this year’s celebrity hosts HG Nelson and James Valentine. Special prizes for the winning trivia team, best dressed guest and table.

Details: \$80/person, \$800/table includes entertainment, platters to share and drinks on arrival; tickets are strictly limited so book early; for online bookings go to <http://quiz.eventarc.com/2884>; for further information contact Monica Fernandez (02) 9361 5606 or fundraising@asylumseekerscentre.org.au

Monday 23 May – Sydney

Human Rights 2011 featuring Bangarra Dance Theatre

For the first time in Australia, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Navi Pillay will be giving a public presentation, joining in a panel discussion which includes one of Australia's most prominent and well-respected Aboriginal Elders Prof Patrick Dodson and Director of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Paris Aristotle AM. The forum will be facilitated by popular TV broadcaster Indira Naidoo. Admission is free but it is essential to register.

Details: 5:00pm-7:00pm; Sydney Town Hall, George Street; to register go to www.humanrights.gov.au/hr2011/register.html

Wednesday 25 May – Melbourne

Free event for Karen youth

This activities night for Karen youth aged 16 years and over is being held as part of Responsible Gambling Awareness Week. There will be lots of free food, games and giveaways.

Details: 5:30pm-7:00 pm; Wayaperri House (Community Centre), 106-110 Duncans Road, Werribee; for more information contact the New Hope Foundation on (03) 9974 1700.

Thursday 26 May – Melbourne

Sexual and Reproductive Health for Refugee and Immigrant Women

What are the issues affecting immigrant and refugee women's health? Issues to be explored include: lack of choice in reproductive health decisions; unplanned pregnancy; unsafe abortion; infertility and pregnancy complications and STIs. The seminar will discuss sexual health promotion for female international students as part of MCWH Women's Health Connect Project.

Details: 9:00am-2:00pm; Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Suite 207, Level 2, Carringbush Bldg, 134 Cambridge Street, Collingwood; \$65 per person includes lunch and GST; to register email reception@mcwh.org.au or call (03) 9418 0999.

Thursday 26 May – Melbourne

The Impact and Future of the Human Rights Act

In March 2011, 13 years after the enactment of the landmark Human Rights Act, the UK Government launched a Bill of Rights Commission to advise on further reform to strengthen the recognition and protection of human rights and liberties in the UK. At this seminar, hosted by the Human Rights Law Centre, guest speaker Lord Goldsmith QC PC, who was Attorney-General of England and Wales and Northern Ireland from 2001 to 2007, will look at the impact of the UK Human Rights Act, the potential British Bill of Rights and lessons Australia and Victoria can draw from the UK's human rights experience.

Details: 12:30 to 2:00pm; Law Institute of Victoria, 470 Bourke Street, Melbourne; download a registration form at www.hrlc.org.au/files/Seminar-with-Lord-Goldsmith.pdf

Friday 27 May to Sunday 29 May – Drummond, Victoria

Centacare African Dads and Kids Camp

African fathers are invited to bring along one of their children between the ages of 7-16 for one of two free fantastic camp experiences. The focus of these adventures is to explore the differences and similarities between being a parent in Australia and a parent in Africa. The camp is free.

Details: Doxa Malmsbury Camp, Vaughan Springs Road, Drummond VIC. For further information please contact Kate McKernin on 0418 446 692 or kate.mckernin@centacaremelbourne.org.au

Saturday 28 May – Melbourne

Visit to the Otway National Park & Great Ocean Road for asylum seekers

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre in Brunswick invites asylum seekers to an excursion to Otway National Park and Great Ocean Road. Lunch is provided.

Details: to book contact Paul on (03) 9388 2459 or paul.boyd@uniting.com.au; for further details visit www.aswc.org.au/saturdayprogram

Monday 30 May – Melbourne

Community forum: The Wyndham Migrant Experience

This community forum will showcase Wyndham's cultural diversity from the very first arrivals up to the contemporary migrant experience. Listen to the rich personal stories of a panel of migrants from across the generations and take part in discussion about how we can all best support and plan for the wonderfully diverse range of communities that call Wyndham home.

Details: 6.30pm-8.30pm; Function Centre, Wyndham Civic Centre, 45 Princes Highway, Werribee; RSVP by 25 May to Gwenda Miller on (03) 9742 0818 or email gwenda.miller@wyndham.vic.gov.au

Monday 30 May & Tuesday 31 May – Melbourne

Conference: Our Changing Communities and Community Organisations

If you work in, work for, or care about community, this is the one event of the year that you cannot afford to miss. Some of the many keynote speakers include: Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Age Discrimination; Simon McKeon, 2011 Australian of the Year; and Mark Scott, Managing Director of the ABC.

Details: register online at www.ourcommunity.com.au/cic2011, email service@ourcommunity.com.au or phone (03) 9320 6800

Friday 10 June – Melbourne

Nobel Laureate the 14th Dalai Lama in Tibet to address the Melbourne Press Club

The luncheon is titled The Story of the Refugee: Business Ethics, Culture and the Arts and will involve the Dalai Lama in a discussion with four Melbourne residents who were refugees from Burma, Eritrea,

China and Vietnam. The guest speakers will provide a compelling personal insight of their incredible life stories from tragedy and adversity in their home countries, to personal and business success, achieved in Melbourne.

Details: tickets range from premium \$495 to silver \$195; contact Janet Tucker eventassistmelb@dalailamainaustralia.org or (03) 9844 5379

Tuesday 14 June to Friday 17 June – Sydney

2011 Refugee Conference

The 2011 Refugee 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.

Details: conference to be held at the University of New South Wales Kensington Campus, Sydney; further information including key dates and registration details can be found at refugeeconf2011.arts.unsw.edu.au

Until October 2011 – Sydney

Connecting Lives: An interactive exhibition about the lives of three African children

World Vision presents an interactive exhibition with authentic landscapes, stunning visuals and real life environment that will take you to the heart of Africa. Connecting Lives will transport you into the world of three African children struggling against incredible odds.

Details: 134 William Street, Potts Point, Sydney; for information, bookings or to volunteer call (02) 9550 9964 or e-mail connectinglivesenq@worldvision.com.au.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

New DVD on Translating and Interpreting Service

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has released a new DVD explaining how the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) works and how it can help clients. The DVD has three chapters: a guide to TIS National services, working with interpreters and services for medical practitioners. To obtain a free copy of the DVD, call 1300 655 820 or e-mail tispromo@immi.gov.au. The DVD can also be viewed on DIAC's YouTube channel, ImmiTV, at www.youtube.com/user/ImmiTV

Resources on respectful relationships

The Line is an Australian Government campaign aimed at helping teenagers and young adults to understand the importance of respectful relationships. The campaign's website has a range of resources for parents and young people, including resources specifically designed for people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The resources are available at www.theline.gov.au/CALD

Report on the role of education in preventing legal problems amongst refugees

Published by the Victorian Law Foundation, this report presents the findings of a project which aimed to investigate whether legal and financial problems experienced by refugees could be prevented if refugees were given more information about common legal issues before they arrived in Australia or early in the settlement process. The report is available for download at www.victorialawfoundation.org.au/images/stories/CLCReport_2009-2010.pdf

Consumer rights fact sheets in 29 languages

The new national Australian Consumer Law provides basic rights for consumers to return goods that they have bought, including if they are faulty, don't match samples, or doesn't perform as expected. Consumer protection agencies have prepared a fact sheet explaining consumers refund and return rights. The fact sheets are available in 29 languages and can be downloaded at www.consumerlaw.gov.au/content/Content.aspx?doc=resources_consumer.htm

Information on new tenancy laws in NSW

On 31 January 2011, new residential tenancy laws began in NSW, affecting tenants and landlords. All members of the public who rent a place to live, including members of your community, are impacted by these changes. NSW Fair Trading has a range of resources available to help raise awareness of the new laws, including: audio information in 10 community languages; video presentations and fact sheets. Visit www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/About_us/News_and_events/Tenancy_reforms.html

Resources on culturally and linguistically diverse families

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has compiled a bibliography of resources on culturally and linguistically diverse families in Australia. The bibliography, which includes links to electronic resources, is available at www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq018/frq018-8.html

Building trust: Working with Muslim communities in Australia

This report reviews the Community Policing Partnerships Project (CPPP), one of eight projects implemented under the Australian Human Rights Commission's Community Partnerships for Human Rights (CPHR) program. The CPHR's central goal was to increase social inclusion and to counter discrimination and intolerance towards Australia's Muslim and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Under the CPPP, police and communities worked together to plan and administer 38 projects across Australia. This report provides a review of the outcomes of these projects and provides some key findings and learnings for future community policing initiatives. The report is at www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/publications/police

New multimedia exhibition: "Leaving Cambodia: Sydney's Pol Pot survivors"

This online exhibition is the first in a series of NSW Migration Heritage Centre video documentaries about the migration and settlement of newcomers to Australia from 1975 onwards. Now living in Western Sydney, six survivors of the Khmer Rouge Pol Pot regime share their memories. Participants reminisce vividly about family loss and separation, freedom and safety through keepsakes and family photos in compelling video histories. The exhibition can be viewed online at www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/leavingcambodia/sydneys-pol-pot-survivors

Australia's top hip hop artists unite to speak for multiculturalism

In a hip hop video specially recorded in support of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), four artists of diverse cultural backgrounds (Malaysian, Indian, Greek and Tongan Australians) come together to speak out against the recent attacks on multiculturalism. Featured artists include international award winning slam poet and rapper Omar bin Musa, Hau Latukefu of Koolism, Kodak and Lesson MC. The video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_h9arg2j3g

Australian advocates for asylum seekers tell their stories

In this book, entitled Acting From the Heart (edited by Sarah Mares and Louise Newman), fifty contributors describe how they became involved in supporting asylum seekers and refugees. Usually \$26.95, the book is available at the special price of \$15.00 paid by credit card or EFT (includes postage within Australia) until end May 2011. To purchase a copy, contact Finch Publishing through info@finch.com.au

Findings from workshop on Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion

Last year, a workshop on Multiculturalism and Social Inclusion was organised last year in Melbourne by the Migration, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism Thematic Group of The Australian Sociological Association with support from Deakin University's Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation. The findings from the event have now been published in the Journal of Intercultural Studies 32(2) as a Critical Review.

UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for asylum seekers from Eritrea

The guidelines note that serious human rights violations continue to occur in Eritrea and notes that many groups remain at risk of persecution, including persons avoiding military service, political opponents, journalists and other media professionals, trade unionists and labour rights activists, minority religious and ethnic groups, women and children at risk of violence, female genital mutilation or child marriages, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals and victims of trafficking. The guidelines can be read at www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dfe0ec2.html

Report on alleged human rights violations during the conflict in Sri Lanka

The UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka recently released this report on the nature and scope of alleged human rights violations during the final stages of the conflict in Sri Lanka. The Panel reported credible allegations indicating that a wide range of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were committed by the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE (often referred to as the Tamil Tigers), some of which would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The alleged crimes include the repeated and systematic shelling by Government forces of hospitals and spaces where IDPs were crowded, despite ample warnings and knowledge of the risk to civilians. Testimony and visual images also indicate LTTE cadres or suspects were executed, disappeared and possibly subjected to rape and sexual violence by Sri Lankan military forces. The LTTE is also reported to have shown a callous disregard for civilians, using them as a "human buffer," forcibly recruiting them for military purposes, and preventing them from fleeing. The report is available at www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/POE_Report_Full.pdf

Report on irregular migration in the UK

This report, published by the Institute for Public Policy Research, examines the issue of irregular migration and how its scale and impact can be reduced. The report includes an overview of irregular migration in the UK, its key drivers and impacts and strategies for reducing irregular migration. The report is at

[www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=/ecomm/files/No Easy Options Apr2011.pdf&a=skip](http://www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=/ecomm/files/No_Easy_Options_Apr2011.pdf&a=skip)

Report on protecting environmentally displaced people

This report from the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford investigate the capacity of national legal frameworks to protect and mediate the rights of people vulnerable to environmental displacement induced by climate change. The report can be downloaded at www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/Zetter-%20EnvDispRep%2015022011.pdf

Revised Sphere Handbook on humanitarian assistance

The Sphere Handbook outlines the core principles that govern humanitarian action, asserts the right of populations to protection and assistance and sets out minimum standards and best practice in humanitarian response. The 2011 edition consolidates the latest best practices in the sector; integrates a set a new emerging issues such as disaster risk reduction, climate change, conflict sensitivity, urban settings, early recovery and education; and enhances linkages and coherence with other quality and accountability products such as the HAP Standard, the People in Aid Code and the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. The Handbook can be downloaded at www.sphereproject.org

OPPORTUNITIES

Nominations open for 2011 Humanitarian Awards

As part of Refugee Week 2011, STARTTS in conjunction with the Refugee Council of Australia will once again be awarding the Humanitarian Awards to those individuals or organisations making a difference to refugees in NSW. STARTTS is currently looking for nominees from a variety of fields. Anyone can make a nomination, so if you know someone who has done great work with refugees, make sure you nominate them for an award this year. For further details and to download a nomination form, go to www.startts.org.au/default.aspx?id=86. *Nominations must be received by 27 May 2011.*

Applications open for 2011-12 Human Rights Framework education grants

The Human Rights Framework Education Grants provide small grants to a wide range of community organisations to deliver practical, grassroots human rights education projects for the community and vulnerable groups. Potential applicants should read the Applicant Program Guidelines and complete an Application Form, both available at www.ag.gov.au/hrgrants. *Applications close at 5:00pm on 19 May 2011.*

Applications open for Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program

The Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program will provide grants of between \$5,000 and \$50,000 to create opportunities for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to engage with sport and physical activity. Further information and details on how to apply can be found

at www.ausport.gov.au/participating/all_cultures/get_involved/grant. Applications close **Friday 27 May 2011**.

Applications open for Youth Development and Support Program

This year's Youth Development and Support Program will focus funding on projects under the theme "Youth arts and creative enterprises". Applications should demonstrate how the projects will enable young people to engage in the arts and creative enterprises. Projects should aim to enhance wellbeing and build resilience of young people and/or demonstrate the social and economic benefits of engaging with the arts and the broader community. Further information and details on how to apply can be found at www.youth.gov.au/News/Pages/ydsprogram_010410.aspx. **Applications close Friday 27 May 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 entries: PLURAL+ 2011 Youth Video Festival

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.**

Call for expressions of interest: Multicultural Women's Sport Leaders Program

The Office of Sport and Recreation (NSW) are calling for EOIs from community members to take part in the annual Multicultural Women's Sport Leaders Program. The program assists women (over 18 years of age) from multicultural backgrounds who are already involved in community organisations focusing on sport and/or physical activity, to take on greater roles of leadership within these organisations. Course dates are July 22, 23 & 30. For more information contact Birgitte Lund birgitte.lund@communities.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9006 3860. **EOIs close 24 June 2011.**

New rugby club for disadvantaged and indigenous youth

Pittwater Rugby Club has been established to provide an opportunity for disadvantaged and indigenous youth to play rugby in a safe and secure environment. The Club is looking for boys aged 10 to play in the Sydney competition. No experience is necessary as training is provided by Australian Rugby accredited coaches. All rugby gear is supplied and there is no cost to play. For further information please contact David Hawkins on 0419 419 103 or via email to pittwaterrugby@bigpond.com

Call for written submissions: Inquiry into the Victorian Human Rights Charter

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 requires the Attorney-General to cause a review of the first four years of its operation to be undertaken. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee is currently undertaking this review. Guidelines for submissions to the review are available at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc. Further information is available from the Committee's Senior Legal Adviser, Mr Andrew Homer on (03) 8682 2891 or charter.review@parliament.vic.gov.au. The closing date for submissions is **10 June 2011**.

Arts About Us: challenging race-based discrimination

VicHealth's Arts About Us program encourages dialogue about the benefits of cultural diversity and the harm caused by race-based discrimination. Sixteen Arts About Us projects are partnering with organisations across Victoria to develop arts-based programs, shows and exhibitions that celebrate

cultural diversity and help people understand the impacts of race-based discrimination. For information on getting involved in the project, visit www.artsaboutus.com.au

Book a stall at the 2011 Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival

The 2011 One World Many Faces, the Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival, is a major regional event that is being held on Sunday 14 August in Queens Park. The Festival brings together multicultural organisations, schools, service clubs, welfare agencies, and performers to highlight the diversity of our communities. The Festival provides its largest marquee for government and non-government agencies and organisations working with refugees and migrants – where you can showcase to the public your programs and services. For more information contact Toowoomba Regional Council's Multicultural Development Officer on 131 872 or info@toowoombarc.qld.gov.au

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

UNAOC is currently in discussion with a range of Australian organisations to plan an IBIS regional launch and workshop in Melbourne later this year. Further details will be made available soon.

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.*

Where and What is Victoria's Immigration and Settlement Material Heritage?

Many of Victoria's ethnic groups still hold collections of materials which immigrants valued enough to bring with them. The material reflects their particular experience in the settlement process and the adaptation of their original culture to their new home. Arts Australia is supporting an Initial Scoping Study conducted by Dr Helen Light which will provide an overall indication of the number and scale of multicultural collections in Victoria in order to develop a methodology, for assessing and scoping the collection of material, stories, condition, access and ownership. It is hoped to eventually find a way to help communities preserve their material for posterity. If you have any information regarding the whereabouts of Victorian migration and settlement objects or about communities that hold their own history, contact Dr Helen Light on 0416 096 160 or helenlight@netscape.net.au

Call for abstracts: 2011 National Conference on Volunteering

The 2011 National Conference on Volunteering to be held in Brisbane from 9-11 November 2011. For more information, go to www.volunteeringaustralia.org. *The deadline for abstracts is 16 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)

Xanana Gusmao slaps down PM's plan

East Timor's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao has rejected the Gillard government's proposed refugee processing centre, saying it would cause social divisions within the tiny nation. Breaking his silence on the asylum-seeker plan Julia Gillard revealed eight months ago, Mr Gusmao said Dili would not have a bar of the idea. (The Australian, 1 April)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/xanana-gusmao-slaps-down-pms-plan/story-fn59niix-1226031631253

Asylum centre 'four months away'

Wickham Point detention centre is still muddy scrubland with the planning approvals yet to be finalised, despite plans to transfer 500 detainees there within four months. It will be the largest centre on the mainland. (The Australian, 2 April)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/asylum-centre-four-months-away/story-fn59niix-1226032280368

Afghan MP urges humane treatment of asylum seekers

The federal government's toughened policy on Afghan asylum claims - and the suicide of two young Afghan men in detention centres - has come under fire from a prominent Afghan parliamentarian. Hazara MP Mohammad Mohaqiq has pleaded that Australia treat Hazara boat arrivals humanely and given assistance on Australian soil - in the same spirit that Australian troops are fighting the Taliban in the homeland they fled. (The Age, 5 April)

www.theage.com.au/national/afghan-mp-urges-humane-treatment-of-asylum-seekers-20110404-1cynh.html

Tasmania to house asylum seekers

The Federal Government has announced plans to house asylum seekers at a Defence site in Tasmania. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen says up to 400 single men will be accommodated at the site, located on a rifle range in Pontville, near Hobart. (ABC, 5 April)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/05/3182657.htm?section=justin

Mainland detainees in tents despite riot risk

Almost 200 asylum-seekers are being housed in tents at the country's newest mainland detention centre, less than three weeks after riots at Christmas Island saw such makeshift accommodation burnt to the ground. Detainees inside the converted Scherger air force base on Cape York said yesterday about 200 Sri Lankans had been sleeping in tents. "There are six tents and they all have lots of double bunks side by side," a detainee told The Australian. "They leak water and are very loud because there are generators right near them that go all night." (7 April, The Australian)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/mainland-detainees-in-tents-again-despite-risk-of-further-riots/story-e6frg6nf-1226034948219

Nothing illegal about seeking asylum

Paul Power, CEO of RCOA, responds to Greg Sheridan's claims that asylum-seeking, if done by boat, is not about refuge but rather about an "illegal immigration industry". (7 April, The Australian)

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/commentary/nothing-illegal-about-seeking-asylum/story-e6frgd0x-1226034924740

Calls for local organisations to support Hunter refugees

A Catholic nun who helps refugees in the Hunter says local organisations would be better suited to assisting refugee families settle in the region. Concerns have been raised that Navitas, which has just been awarded another three-year Federal Government contract, are not providing families with appropriate services, including accommodation. The housing has been described as "slum-like" and the Federal Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen says his Department will investigate. (ABC, Newcastle 8 April) www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/08/3185596.htm?site=newcastle

Long way to the top for Alex

The migrant boy who once stood on the wooden boards of Station Pier and wondered what his new country would bring to him yesterday became the 28th Governor of Victoria. Alex Chernov, 72, born in Lithuania and who immigrated to Australia with his Russian parents, sat on a golden throne in the ballroom of Government House, as about 500 of Victoria's leading citizens burst into loud applause. (Herald Sun, 9 April 2011)

www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/itsbeen-a-long-way-to-the-top-for-alex/story-fn6bfm6w-1226036223488

Asylum hub opposed

Pontville and Brighton residents have voiced opposition to the Federal Government's decision to place 400 asylum seekers at a detention centre at Pontville's old defence facility. While most sympathise with the plight of the arriving refugees, the Sunday Tasmanian yesterday encountered many residents who said they, and the community, were definitely not in favour of the move. (Sunday Tasmanian, 10 April)

www.themercury.com.au/article/2011/04/10/221321_tasmania-news.html

Timor plan not on Ramos-Horta's agenda

East Timorese President Jose Ramos-Horta says a plan for a regional processing centre to be built in his country has not been on his agenda for months despite Prime Minister Julia Gillard insisting

negotiations have been ongoing. While Mr Ramos-Horta says his country has not yet closed the door on the idea, he says that even if an agreement was reached, it would take years before such a facility could be built. (Sydney Morning Herald, 12 April)

news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/timor-plan-not-on-ramoshortas-agenda-20110412-1dba3.html

Barnett flays agency over 12-hour delay on unrest

West Australian Premier Colin Barnett has accused the Immigration Department of being less than open about incidents inside detention centres, after it emerged that police were notified of a disturbance in the desert town of Leonora 12 hours late. Mr Barnett's claim came amid rising pressures on mainland detention facilities, which now hold 4522 asylum-seekers who have arrived by boat. It also came as East Timorese President Jose Ramos-Horta said a detention centre in his country remained a possibility. (The Australian, 13 April)

www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/barnett-flays-agency-over-12-hour-delay-on-unrest/story-e6frg13u-1226038227523

AFP's detention riot response under scrutiny

The use of force by Australian Federal Police during riots on Christmas Island last month will be investigated by the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Federal Government's immigration detention centre service provider, SERCO, will also come under scrutiny over incidents in which tear-gas canisters and bean-bag bullets were used to subdue detainees. Ombudsman Allan Asher says the Immigration Department may have breached the Government's detention regulations by keeping families with children and unaccompanied minors behind the wire. Mr Asher says he wants to look at whether Immigration and SERCO demonstrated "due process and considered decision-making". (ABC, 14 April)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/14/3191698.htm?section=justin

Christmas Island mayor backs riot review

The Christmas Island Shire president Gordon Thomson has welcomed a Commonwealth Ombudsman investigation in the Federal Police's handling of last month's asylum seekers riots. (ABC Radio, 15 April)

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/04/15/3192022.htm

Two Lankan refugees in Australia overlooked

Two Sri Lankan asylum seekers locked in the Christmas Island Detention Centre in Australia had their visa applications delayed for six months because they had not been properly logged and authorities did not realise they were there. This was just one of the bungles found during an investigation into Australia's failing detention procedures. Sources from within Christmas Island's North West Point facility said the two Sri Lankan men fell off the centre's internal system after arriving by boat last year.

(Daily Mirror, 18 April) print.dailymirror.lk/news/news/41257.html

Suicide fears as more asylum seeker boats land

Two asylum seekers are believed to have tried to commit suicide at the Perth immigration detention centre early yesterday. The Immigration Department confirmed that two male detainees threatened self-harm but centre staff stopped them hurting themselves. Neither was injured and both were given medical checks, a spokesman said. There have been several recent cases of self-harm or attempted self-harm in Australian immigration detention centres. (The Australian, 19 April)

Villawood Detention Centre fires under control, says Immigration

Protesting asylum seekers have torched a number of buildings inside Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre, sparking an explosion, as authorities fail to gain control of the volatile situation. Firefighters are unable to enter the facility due to safety concerns. NSW Police are maintaining a security perimeter outside the centre due to jurisdictional limits, keeping scores of onlookers a safe distance away. (AAP, 21 April)

www.news.com.au/national/rooftop-detention-protest-at-villawood-detention-centre-worsens/story-e6frfkvr-1226042515005

Detention protests spread across country

Four days after asylum-seekers torched buildings at Sydney's Villawood detention centre, detainees and refugee advocates on the other side of the country were showing signs of defiance last night, with hunger strikes and demonstrations being staged at the Curtin and Christmas Island facilities. As rooftop protests continued inside Villawood, The Australian has been told at least one detainee at Christmas Island's main immigration detention centre – the scene of massive riots last month – was

found yesterday with their lips sewn together. An Immigration department spokesman confirmed a detainee had harmed himself, saying the injuries were not life threatening and he was being monitored. (The Australian, 25 April)

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/detention-protests-spread-across-country/story-e6frg6n6-1226044228620

200 turn out to support Villawood detention centre refugees

The three detainees on the roof of Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre could be sleeping on top of the building for a sixth night as negotiations to get them down continue to be unsuccessful. A spokeswoman for the Department of Immigration said security company Serco had been handling all the negotiations and no details of the process could be revealed. This afternoon, hundreds of refugee supporters gathered outside the detention centre to support the three detainees protesting on the rooftop who have been supplied with water but not food. (Daily Telegraph, 26 April)

www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/just-a-normal-day-of-protests-and-escapes/story-e6freuy9-1226044156637

Process refugees faster: senator

A convener of Labor's Left has called on the government to "pedal harder" to process asylum seekers as a way to reduce tensions in detention centres. His appeal comes as the Refugee Council of Australia said there had been a 1400 per cent increase in long-term detention in just a year. The council's chief executive officer, Paul Power, said that while immigration detainees grew by 196 per cent, people detained more than six months grew seven times faster from 258 in March 2010 to 3901 in March. (The Age, 28 April)

www.theage.com.au/national/process-refugees-faster-senator-20110427-1dwwz.html

Talking tough but acting weak has left boats policy in a muddle

Since Kevin Rudd's election in 2007, the Labor government has had problems with mixed messages; using inflated rhetoric, building unrealistic expectations, concentrating on political one-liners at odds with reality, and confusing politics and policy. Yesterday Paul Power, chief executive of the Refugee Council of Australia, said "Given that the last freeze was lifted in September 2010 and today there are 3901 long-term detainees we can see that the freeze is just one of many factors in a system that is not working." "To cease processing this small amount of vulnerable people was a very poor decision on the part of the Australian government and has created a number of major problems down the track." (The Australian, 29 April)