



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

15 February 2013

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

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

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NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

RCOA presents community views about Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program

After months of concentrated work, RCOA has completed its annual submission on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. Last month, the draft submission and recommendations were presented to the then Immigration Minister Chris Bowen at the Minister's annual discussion on the Humanitarian Program with representatives of peak bodies. Key recommendations include: reconsideration of the removal of eligibility to the Special Humanitarian Program for refugees who arrive by boat after 13 August; ending the numerical link between the onshore and offshore components of the program; reviewing the pilot private sponsorship program and revising the proposed visa application charge to a more affordable level; progress through the Bali Process to build regional refugee protection in the Asia-Pacific region; abandonment of offshore processing of asylum seekers; using detention as a last resort for children in detention and; better support for asylum seekers to secure work. Accompanying the submission is a 36-page statistical appendix. The submission reflects feedback from more than 920 people and 230 organisations, representing 34 communities through consultations in all States and Territories. The full submission is available here: <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub.php>

Statistical snapshot of refugee needs

To coincide with the release of its annual submission, RCOA has produced a two-page snapshot of key international and national statistics on refugee needs. Drawn from information in the submission, the snapshot provides data on global refugee movements, asylum trends, resettlement and immigration detention. It is available at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub/2013-14-IntakeSub-stat-snapshot.pdf>

Six month progress report on Expert Panel

As it is now six months since the Australian Government's Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers released its report, RCOA has produced an analysis of progress on the Panel's 22 recommendations. The analysis was released on 13 February with a media release which noted that the Government's deterrent policies of offshore processing in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, as well as punitive restrictions to family reunion, were destructive to asylum seekers and had failed to address the causes of refugee movements. RCOA welcomed the Government's decision to increase Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 20,000 places but was critical of the 'no advantage' test and the Government's strategy for the return and removal of asylum seekers since August 13. The report and media release urged the Government to address the unfinished business of progressing regional refugee protection in the Asia Pacific region. "We must put as much energy as possible into focusing regional attention on how to offer fair treatment and support to those who need refugee protection. So much effort has been put into the interception and detention of people on the move in the region but we are still yet to have serious regional dialogue about why people are moving," CEO Paul Power said. The report can be accessed at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2013-EP-Progress.pdf> and the media release at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130212_Expert_Panel.pdf

UNHCR issues damning Manus Island report

A UNHCR report has warned of significant inadequacies in the transfer of asylum seekers from Australia to Manus Island, underlining the critical need for the Australian Government to respond and review its

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world

policy on offshore processing. The report, based on a UNHCR site visit to Manus Island, found that the current arrangements of detaining all asylum seekers on a mandatory and indefinite basis without an individual assessment or review amounted to arbitrary detention. It also described conditions for asylum seekers on Manus Island as harsh and inadequate and recommended the suspension of transfers of children to the island until administrative and legal safeguards were in place. RCOA issued a statement to reiterate its opposition to offshore processing which is available at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130204_Manus_UNHCR.pdf. The UNHCR report can be found at: <http://bit.ly/12ljD8o>.

Asylum visa grant rates released

A RCOA analysis of the final grant rates for asylum seekers, after the primary decision and merits review processes, has shown that 91% of “Irregular Maritime Arrivals”, whose asylum process was completed in 2011-12 were found to be refugees, with the grant rate over four years being 93%. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) data shows that 44% of “non-IMAs” were found to be refugees, with a 46% grant rate over five years. Further analysis of and statistics from major countries of origin are available at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/131214_Asylum_Grant.pdf. The DIAC figures are at http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/asylum/_files/asylum-trends-aus-annual-2011-12.pdf

National honour for the late John Gibson

The former president of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), John Gibson, was acknowledged for his decades of service to refugees and asylum seekers with a posthumous award in the 2013 Australia Day honours list. Mr Gibson, who was a board member of RCOA from 2003 until his death in September 2012 and president from 2006 to 2012, was named a Member the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) for “significant service to international relations as an advocate for human rights”. Mr Gibson’s honour is one of more than a dozen to Australians who have been acknowledged for their service to refugees and the organisations which support them. They include two leading figures in Australia’s African communities: Juliana Nkrumah AM, a former chairperson of the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women and co-founder of the African Women’s Advocacy Unit, and Dr Joseph Masika OAM, founder and chairperson of the African Communities Council of South Australia. For a full list of Australia Day recipients honoured for their work in the refugee sector, go to: http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130126_AusDay.pdf

Excision policy undermines regional refugee protection

RCOA CEO Paul Power gave evidence on 31 January to a Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee hearing into the Migration Amendment (Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals and Other Measures), telling Senators that the Australian Government was damaging efforts to build regional cooperation on refugee protection by pushing ahead with legislation to expand the policy under which asylum seekers are removed to other countries. The Committee was told the legislation undermined international standards on which the protection of refugees was based and, if passed, would allow any asylum seeker arriving by boat, including those who reach the Australian mainland, to be removed to countries such as Nauru and Papua New Guinea. “Of the one million or more people who seek asylum around the world in any year, very few arrive with a pre-approved visa,” Mr Power said. “If this type of legislation was adopted across the world, we would see the global system of asylum fall apart very quickly.” RCOA’s statement is at: http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130131_UMA_Senate.pdf
RCOA’s submission to the Senate committee inquiry was lodged in December and can be found at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1212-Excision.pdf>

Pilot sponsorship program welcome but needs further work

RCOA expressed its disappointment at the cost structure of the Australian Government’s pilot private sponsorship program. The pilot program, announced by then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen in December, will be part of the recently-expanded 20,000-place Refugee and Humanitarian Program while sponsors will be subject to a two-stage visa application charge of between \$20,000 and \$30,000. “While RCOA is supportive of the general concept of increasing opportunities for community groups to resettle refugees, we are disappointed at the scale of the visa application charge, which will make it difficult for volunteer groups to sponsor significant numbers of refugees,” RCOA CEO Paul Power said. http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/121215_Sponsor.pdf

Suspend forced return of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka

RCOA wrote to the then Minister for Immigration Chris Bowen asking him to immediately suspend the forced return of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka. RCOA CEO Paul Power said he was particularly concerned about information he had received about the forced return from Darwin of a group of Tamil people to Sri Lanka. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/121206>Returns.pdf>. RCOA's letter is available at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/s&l/121205/CBowen_SLanka_returns.pdf.

Resettlement program for at-risk Afghan employees welcomed

RCOA welcomed the Australian Government's announcement to offer resettlement places to at-risk Afghan people employed to assist Australia's activities in Afghanistan. Our statement can be found at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/public_html/n/mr/121213/Afghanatrisk.pdf

Praise for Malaysia for accepting stranded asylum seekers

The Malaysian Government was commended for its decision to accept 40 asylum seekers who were rescued at sea. RCOA CEO Paul Power said Malaysia's intervention was in stark contrast to the mean-spirited behaviour of Singapore which had earlier refused entry to the Vietnamese-registered cargo ship that had rescued the asylum seekers, believed to be Rohingya people fleeing persecution in Burma's Rakhine state. See <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/121220/MalaysiaRohingya.pdf>

Aid budget should be preserved

In December, RCOA expressed concern about the Australian Government's decision to divert funds from the foreign aid budget to meet the costs of processing asylum claims in Australia, viewing it as an unacceptable use of aid money. See <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/121218/Aidbudget.pdf>

Asia Pacific NGOs dismayed by Australian asylum policy changes

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) issued a statement in late November on Australian law and policy on asylum seekers and refugees, expressing its dismay recent changes. APRRN represents more than 120 NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers in 21 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, including many of the NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. <http://bit.ly/U4AG7o>

Submission on ASIO security assessments

RCOA made a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into the Migration and Security Legislation Amendment (Review of Security Assessments) Bill 2012. The submission welcomed the Bill as a mechanism to improve procedural fairness and to encourage alternatives to indefinite detention for recognised refugees with adverse security assessments. See: <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1212-ASIO.pdf>

Submission on Government's planned integrated approach to service delivery

RCOA's submission to the Australian Government on its proposed Integrated Service Delivery Framework, argued for improvements to the way services to asylum seekers are delivered. The submission drew on feedback from RCOA's recent national community consultations. See <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1212-ISDF.pdf>

Submission on planning for 2013-14 Migration Program

Recent policy changes on humanitarian family reunion will have significant implications for the Family Stream of the Migration Program. As a result, RCOA responded to a call for submissions to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's 2013-14 Migration Program planning. Our submission is at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1211-Migration.pdf>

Submission to the Australian Government's Future Directions discussion paper

RCOA made a submission to the Australian Government's Family Support Program "Future Directions" Discussion Paper. The submission argues that families, children and young people from refugee backgrounds could benefit from targeted programs to assist them in accessing services and support to settle successfully in Australia. See <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1211-FSP.pdf>

Submission on the Convention Against Torture

RCOA made a submission to the Attorney General's Department on the Draft Fifth Report by Australia on the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The submission called for further explanation or clarification of a number of issues that have significant implications for Australia's compliance with the Convention. <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1211-CAT.pdf>

Keep up to date with RCOA through Facebook and Twitter

The best way to keep up with RCOA is through Facebook and Twitter. We regularly publish links to new RCOA statements and research and to interesting articles in the media on refugee issues. Our Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/pages/Refugee-Council-of-Australia-RCOA/157472830949702. Our Twitter feed is @OzRefugeeCounc.

COMING EVENTS

Waves of Migration light show

Sunday 26 January to Sunday 17 February, Sydney NSW

The "Waves of Migration" light show explores migration to Australia and the compelling stories of those who have come to Australia as migrants or refugees. The show can be viewed daily from vantage points around Darling Harbour.

Details: daily 8:30pm-10:30pm; Australian National Maritime Museum, 2 Murray Street, Darling Harbour; for further details, visit <http://waves.anmm.gov.au>.

"Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" national tour

February and March, Australia-wide

"Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" is a documentary looking at the circumstances and decisions that lead someone to become a 'boat person'. Jessie Taylor and Ali Reza Sadiqi travelled across Indonesia and met with 250 asylum seekers in jails, detention centres and hostels. Through candid interviews, hidden camera footage and in the words of asylum seekers themselves, the story of the 'refugee' is told. Screenings of the documentary are being held throughout Australia in February and March.

Details: for details of screenings in your area or to host a screening, visit <http://deepblueseafilm.com/national-tour/>.

Afghanistan: One of the worst places to be a woman?

Tuesday 19 February, Parramatta NSW

Hosted by Amnesty International Australia, this panel discussion will feature prominent Afghan women's rights advocate Ms Wazhma Frogh, recipient of the 2009 International Woman of Courage Award, who co-founded Afghanistan's first research institute focused on women, peace and security and served as former Afghanistan Country Director of Global Rights. On a special visit to Australia, Ms Frogh will share the inspiring efforts of Afghan women to improve their situation and discuss what Australia can do to ensure that these gains are not lost among current political negotiations and the withdrawal of international military troops. The panel also includes James Brown, Military Fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy and former officer in the Australian Army attached to Special Forces in Afghanistan, as well as Australian experts and community leaders. Karen Middleton, Chief Political Correspondent for SBS World News Australia and author of "An Unwinnable War - Australia in Afghanistan", will moderate the panel. Light refreshments will be provided.

Details: 6:30pm for 7:00pm start to 8:30pm; Parramatta Town Hall, 182 Church Street, Parramatta; RSVP online at <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/event/5369438134>.

Workshop: Working with CALD and refugee communities in the child and family welfare setting

Wednesday 20 February, Eight Mile Plains QLD

Presented by Jatinder Kaur, Director of JK Diversity Consultants, this workshop will cover the following topics: including early intervention and prevention, statutory child protection intervention, out-of-home care, cultural diversity in CALD/refugee communities, migration and settlement issues, communication and language considerations, diverse child rearing practices, assessment frameworks and cultural sensitive practice considerations and the cultural needs of CALD/refugee children in out-of-home care.

Details: \$150.00 per person; 9:00am-4:00pm; Key Assets Fostering, Conference Room, Building 7 , Freeway Office Park, 2728 Logan Road, Eight Mile Plains; to register, e-mail support@jkdiversityconsultant.com.au or call 0422 887 579.

Free STARTTS workshop for community organisations: Using social media

Thursday 21 February, Auburn NSW

This workshop, run in partnership with TRI, will provide participants with the skills to understand the main social media networks and their functionalities and use existing platforms and templates to create, set up and administer their own webpage or message content.

Details: Auburn Centre for Community, 44A Macquarie Road, Auburn; for further information or to register, contact Patrick Baffoun on (02) 9794 1900 or Patrick.Baffoun@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.

Hillbillies & Gypsies for Refugees: A benefit concert for RCOA

Friday 22 February, Katoomba NSW

Hosted by the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group, this benefit concert will feature Waiting for Guinness, The Slowdowns, Lime and Steel, Belle Jar and Pacopezants. Funds raised will be donated to the Refugee Council.

Details: \$15.00 at the door; 8:00pm-10:00pm; Carrington Hotel, The Baroque, 86 Bathurst Road, Katoomba.

STARTTS workshop: Core concepts in working with people from refugee backgrounds

Friday 22 February, Carramar NSW

This one-day introductory workshop is designed to put a framework of understanding around working with refugees and asylum seekers. It focuses on understanding the link between what refugees have been through, the sorts of issues and behaviours they may present with, and how to work in a way that fosters feelings of trust, safety and control, while minimising the risk of retraumatisation. Participants will be encouraged to think about how to apply the concepts to their own workplace, and will leave the workshop feeling more confident in utilising their skills and experience with refugee and asylum seeker clients.

Details: \$149.00 (students \$99.00); 9:30am-4:30pm; STARTTS, 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; register online at <http://www.startts.org.au>.

Youth 2 Youth soccer tournament

Saturday 23 February, Baybrook VIC

The African Australia Community Centre's Youth 2 Youth program is staging a soccer tournament for young people living in the western suburbs. Music, entertainment and lunch will be available.

Details: 10:00am-5:00pm; Recwest Community Recreation Centre 39 Lily Street, Braybrook; for further information, contact Kenny Makaye at kmakaye@bsl.org.au or call (03) 8412 8816 or 0411 036 683.

One-day conference: Multicultural Media at a Crossroads

Monday 25 February, Sydney NSW

This joint event, hosted by the Multicultural Media Awards and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences/Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre University of Technology Sydney, explores the challenges for the ethnic and multicultural media as well as the mainstream media, from developing technologies, digital convergence and changing populations. The event will be opened by Her Excellency Prof Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of NSW, and will include an address by special guest the Hon Chris Bowen, Minister for Tertiary Education.

Details: 9:30am-4:00pm; Theatrette, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney; register online at <http://multiculturalmediaconference.eventbrite.com.au> or by phone to the office of Shaoquett Moselmane MLC on (02) 9230 2526 or (02) 9230 2722.

Voices from Afghanistan

Wednesday 27 February, Sydney NSW

This forum seeks to consider the impact of troop withdrawal on Afghanistan and to identify challenges for all members of the Afghan community in the coming two years. Speakers will include President of the Hazara Women of Australia Najeeba Wazefadost, UWS Academic Dr Ehsan Azari and freelance journalist and photographer Abdul Hekmat.

Details: 6:00pm-8:00pm; Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament House, 6 Macquarie Street, Sydney; RSVP online at <https://www.facebook.com/events/404610529625499/>; for further details, contact Mark Riboldi on (02) 9230 3030 or mark.riboldi@parliament.nsw.gov.au.

Free health literacy forum: Curling the cultural barrier

Thursday 28 February, Fitzroy VIC

Hosted by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health and featuring a panel of local and international experts, this forum will explore health literacy and its importance to your workplace. There will also be a focus on health literacy's relevance to current policy priorities, as well as strategies for implementing change to help your organisation become health literate.

Details: 9:15am-1:30pm (registration from 8:45am); Fitzroy Town Hall, 201 Napier Street, Fitzroy; register online at <http://centreceh.wufoo.eu/forms/curling-the-cultural-barrier-health-literacy-forum>.

Foundation House professional development for nurses

Thursday 28 February, Friday 1 March and Tuesday 28 May, Brunswick VIC

Professional development for nurses in refugee health is a two-year program divided into themed modules. The program aims to provide an overview of the key areas of refugee health and wellbeing relevant to refugee health nurses and other nurses who are working with people of a refugee background in a variety of settings. The course will be delivered by experts in refugee health, and torture and trauma counselling. It provides an overview of emerging research, policy and service development in refugee health, as well as the opportunity to share practice experience. The free two-day intensive introductory workshop on refugee health assessment and care in February/March will be followed by a free workshop on refugee women's health.

Details: 9:30am-4:00pm; Foundation House, 6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick; register online at www.trybooking.com/CFZU (February/March introductory workshop) and www.trybooking.com/CGAA (May women's health workshop); for registration enquiries, call (03) 9389 8965 or e-mail pdregistrations@foundationhouse.org.au.

Foundation House seminar: Precarious lives, uncertain futures

Wednesday 6 March, Brunswick VIC

Migration status, and issues of safety for refugees or asylum seekers and their loved ones, means that uncertainty dominates the client experience and their relationships with workers. This session will explore and identify ways of responding to refugees and asylum seekers who are impacted by ongoing uncertainty. It will be of interest to those working in housing, material support, health services and education. Light refreshments provided.

Details: \$50.00; 4:00pm-7:00pm; Foundation House, 6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick; register online at www.trybooking.com/CGAH; for registration enquiries, call (03) 9389 8965 or e-mail pdregistrations@foundationhouse.org.au.

Free STARTTS workshop for community organisations: Youth leadership development

Thursday 7 March, Blacktown NSW

This workshop, run in partnership with the Youth Action and Policy Association, will provide participants with the skills to present perspectives on leadership, identify personal leadership style and development goals, suggest team building and problem-solving activities (including conflict-resolution techniques) and practice mentoring skills.

Details: STARTTS, Suite 2, Ground Floor, 85 Flushcombe Road, Blacktown; for further information or to register, contact Patrick Baffoun on (02) 9794 1900 or Patrick.Baffoun@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.

STARTTS workshop: Core concepts in working with children and adolescents from refugee backgrounds

Friday 8 March, Carramar NSW

This one-day introductory workshop focuses on providing a framework for understanding the unique issues and challenges faced by refugee children and adolescents. It will look at the impact of war and violence from a developmental perspective, with attention paid to attachment and resilience.

Details: \$149.00 (students \$99.00); 9:30am-4:30pm; STARTTS, 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; register online at <http://www.startts.org.au>.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Study of post-detention asylum seekers in the community

“Released But Not Yet Free” by Curtin University Centre for Human Rights researchers Lisa Hartley and Caroline Fleay, explores the experiences of 11 men released after long-term immigration detention in Australia into community-based arrangements while their refugee protection claims were being finalised. The research found long-term detention causes profound mental distress, raising significant implications for asylum seekers and refugees living in the community. The report is available here:

http://blogs.curtin.edu.au/human-rights-education/files/2012/12/ReleasedNotYetFree_BVCD_FINALREPORT.pdf

Settlement experiences of people from South Sudan in Australia

“The Last Mile: Experiences of Settlement and Attitudes to Return among People from South Sudan in Australia” is based on interviews with people from South Sudan living in Australia, providing an insight into the level of settlement service support in housing, employment and education. The report by STATT also provides feedback on discrimination and the place of South Sudanese people in Australian society. The report is available at:

<http://www.statt.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/STATT-The-Last-Mile-Australia-November-2012.pdf>

UNHCR guidelines ensuring every child's right to acquire a nationality

This is the first ever set of detailed guidelines on interpretation and implementation of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The guidelines will be relevant to a wide range of UNHCR operations and provide a solid basis for implementation of a key aspect of UNHCR's statelessness mandate, namely the prevention of statelessness among children. See:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/50d460c72.pdf>

Videos on therapy for asylum seekers

Solace Surviving Exile and Persecution, a UK has worked with the Refugee Council in the UK to produce resources to help reduce stress levels for asylum seekers. See a sample of their work here:

<http://vimeo.com/55474409>

Reporting reconciliation in Sri Lanka

Vimarsanam–Vimansa is a web platform for reporting and documenting the implementation progress of the Recommendations made by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) of Sri Lanka. Curated by Young Asia Television, submissions are invited from organizations and individuals who wish to report on the Recommendations and their implementation progress. The platform is a transparent space, and open to accepting reports in many forms, including situation reports, commentary, formal analysis, anecdotes, photographs, tweets, audio and videos. Details are available at

<http://vimarsanam-vimansa.org/>

UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Protection Needs of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka

UNHCR has updated its Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Sri Lanka. They are available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/50d1a08e2.html>

Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victoria

This VicHealth publication is a summary of key findings of a survey of 1139 individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in four Victorian localities, examining the types, settings and frequency of experiences of race-based discrimination and the impact of these experiences on mental health and wellbeing. Read the report here: <http://bit.ly/UUWrLj>

Resilience, depression and mental health among refugee youth in South Australia

An International Journal of Population Research paper explores the role of resilience in refugee adolescents and the relationship between resilience and depression, other emotional and behavioural problems, and mental health service uptake. Surveying 170 refugee adolescents aged 13 to 17 from South Australia, the research found that females tended to have higher resilience, as did those adolescents who had been living in Australia longer. Adolescents suffering from depressive symptoms or other emotional or behavioural problems had lower resilience. The research is available here:

<http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijpr/2012/485956/>

Barriers to mental health for young refugees

“Barriers to and facilitators of utilisation of mental health services by young people of refugee background” is a collaborative project between Foundation House, the University of Melbourne, Centre for Multicultural Youth and The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne. The project explored the perspectives of experienced practitioners – working in mental health services or in contact with mental health services – about what works and does not work in successfully engaging young people from refugee backgrounds with mental health services. The project is available at: <http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=97372>

Refugee voices about their return to Burma

Burma Partnership has released a documentary feature “Nothing About Us, Without Us: Refugee Voices About Their Return to Burma” that highlights refugees’ voices about repatriation from camps along the Thailand border back into Burma. The video is here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOW07BsBdrM&feature=youtu.be>

Australian Human Rights Commission report on Christmas Island

The Australian Human Rights Commission report contains a summary of observations arising from the October 2012 visit by President Gillian Triggs and staff to immigration detention facilities on Christmas Island. The purpose of the visit was to assess the conditions of detention against internationally accepted human rights standards. The report is available here: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/idc2012_christmasisland.html

OPPORTUNITIES

NSW Premier’s Multicultural Awards now open

Nominations are open for the NSW Premier’s Multicultural Community Medals, Premier’s Multicultural Awards, and the Multicultural Honour Roll. The Awards honour the outstanding contribution of migrants, and those who work in the field of multiculturalism, to this State. Medals will be presented at the annual Premier’s Harmony Dinner where new members of the Multicultural Honour Roll will be announced. The Premier’s Multicultural Awards will be presented to recipients at a public function. Information on eligibility criteria, judging and award categories or how to nominate a member of your community is at: http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/Awards_and_Sponsorships/nsw_premiers_multicultural_awards

Nominations must be posted or hand-delivered by 5pm, Friday 8 March. For enquiries, contact (02) 8255 6815 or premiersmulticulturalawards@crc.nsw.gov.au

Call for papers for Canada’s Journal on Refugees

This special issue will explore environmentally-induced displacement. The journal is inviting submissions that address a range of questions including definitional debates regarding ‘environmental refugees’ and their place within the international protection system. Contributions may be submitted either in English or French and will be published in the language of submission and should not exceed 7500 words. Shorter papers, including commentaries and book reviews, are also welcome. Submission deadline is February 28, 2013. For further information, please contact: the Editor of Refuge, c/o Centre for Refugee Studies, York Research Tower, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto (Ontario), Canada M3J 1P3, refuge@yorku.ca and <http://www.yorku.ca/refuge>

Creative videos on diversity sought from youth

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the International Organization for Migration IOM invite young people to submit original and creative videos focusing on PLURAL+ themes: migration, diversity and social inclusion. Young people up to 25 years old are invited to submit short videos of five minutes maximum in length. Winners will be invited to New York, all travel expenses paid, to present their work at the PLURAL + 2013 Awards Ceremony at the Paley Center for Media in December 2013. Deadline for submissions is 30 June, 2013. Further details are available at www.unaoc.org/pluralplus and via plural@unaoc.org

Applications open for DIAC Diversity and Social Cohesion Program

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP) application round for 2013-14 is now open. The DSCP provides the additional resources often needed by not-for-profit community organisations to develop their own projects and find their own ways of

helping their community build stronger community relations. Community organisations can apply for funding of up to \$50,000 to develop projects that aim to address issues of cultural, racial or religious intolerance or to develop community capacity-building skills. Projects must provide an opportunity for participation and interaction by different members of the community. Applications must be lodged by 5.00pm (AEST) by Friday, 1 March 2013. For further information, including the Application Information Booklet and application form, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/dscp/eligibility-apply.htm> or contact the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program helpdesk on 1800 453 004.

Irene Krastev Award nominations open

Nominations are being sought for the Irene Krastev Award for culturally and linguistically diverse background women in South Australia. The awards will be presented at the 75th Anniversary International Women's Day Committee Luncheon on Thursday, 7 March, 2013 at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Contact Maria Johns on (08) 8241 9900 or mariaj@mac.org.au for enquiries. To enquire about the luncheon, contact Toni Jupe on 0407 170 287. Further information available from the IWD Committee SA website at: <http://www.iwdcommitteesa.org.au/>

Women's Leadership course in South Australia

Multicultural SA is offering a free Women's Leadership Course for women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds starting later this year. Women interested in participating in this course should be willing to play active leadership roles in their communities and pass on their skills and knowledge to other women, as well as display a capacity to work with other communities, have an excellent understanding of their own culture and of the implications of cultural diversity for the broader community and meet other criteria. The closing date is Thursday, 21 February, 2013. For further information, contact Toni Jupe on (08) 8226 1996 or at toni.jupe@sa.gov.au

University of Western Sydney (UWS) refugee scholarship

The UWS Refugee Scholarship provides assistance to refugees in gaining English language entry requirements to start study in UWS College programs or the UWS. Information about selection criteria, eligibility and how to apply are available at <http://www.uwscollege.edu.au/how-to-apply/scholarships>. Closing date is 28 February, 2013 for the April intake.

Youth Leaders Residential Forum in South Australia

The Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia is holding a three-day leadership camp for young people aged between 15 and 27 years from new and emerging communities. The 2013 Youth Leaders Residential Forum will be held at Camp Coorong, Meningie, South Australia from 17 to 19 April, 2013. Applications close Friday, 22 March. Further details are available at (08) 8217 9505 and admin@mrca.com.au

University of Sydney Refugee Language Program

The University of Sydney Refugee Language Program is offering English classes for refugees and asylum seekers. The classes are free and include an advanced and an intermediate class on Saturdays as well as a computer class; and on Wednesdays a Creative Writing class in the Mackie Building. Contact (02) 9351 6796 or lesley.carnus@sydney.edu.au for further information and enrolment details.

Report on sexual and reproductive health of immigrant and refugee women

"Common Threads", a report by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, reports on the sexual and reproductive health experiences of immigrant and refugee women in Australia. The report finds that women of immigrant and refugee background have poorer health outcomes and are at greater risk of developing adverse health conditions than Australian-born women and are less likely to take health-related action when ill. The report is available for download at: http://www.mcwh.com.au/downloads/2012/MCWH_CommonThreads_Report_WEB.pdf. An associated Best Practice Guide is at: http://www.mcwh.com.au/downloads/2012/MCWH_CommonThreads_BestPracticeGuide_WEB.pdf

Call for articles on detention and deportation

Forced Migration Review's 43rd issue, to be published in September 2013, will include a feature on Detention and deportation. Editors are looking for practice-oriented submissions, reflecting a diverse range of experience and opinions, which address questions relating to the legally permissible

circumstances for detention and the consequences, impacts of detention on children and other particularly vulnerable people, human rights, civil society-led alternatives to detention and how they can be promote, the political and/or legal relationship between detention and deportation and various statuses such as temporary or exceptional right to stay, and mechanisms and processes are in place to monitor the fate of deportees after their deportation. Editors are particularly keen to reflect the experiences and knowledge of communities and individuals directly affected by detention and/or deportation. The deadline for submission of articles is 15 April 2013. The full call for articles is at: www.fmreview.org/detention. If you are thinking of writing for FMR, please consult the Guide for Authors at www.fmreview.org/you/writing-fmr and if possible please let them know in advance (at fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk) what particular aspect/s you propose to write about.

Western Australia Transcultural Mental Health Refugee Conference call for abstracts

Organisers of the 4th WA Transcultural Mental Health and 2nd Australasian Refugee Conference have called for abstracts by Friday, 12 April 2013. Further details are available at: <http://www.transrefugee2013.com.au/conference/call-for-abstracts/>

For employment opportunities, go to <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/job.php>. For volunteering opportunities, go to <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/vol.php>

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)

Nauru MP confident asylum seekers getting reasonable standard of care

As tensions heightened this week at the Nauru camp housing nearly 400 asylum seekers sent by Australia, the Nauru Government says it is confident systems are in place to provide a reasonable standard of care. As hungry strikes continue there have also been clashes between detainees and guards. (RNZI, 1 December) <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=72584>

Pawns in asylum trade

"If you get to Australia, you can get visa, and you can get work. Straight away." The pitch is simple, and it's unchanged by the policy whims of a government on the other side of the Indian Ocean. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 December)

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/pawns-in-asylum-trade-20121201-2anl8.html>

'Party time' as PM called a 'hero' over detention policies

Asylum seekers in Indonesia have swung into party mode and labelled Julia Gillard a "hero" after learning they will receive welfare payments and rent assistance should they make it to Australia by boat. The wannabe citizens are ecstatic the government has conceded detention centres are beyond maximum capacity and that asylum seekers would need to be released into the community while their applications for refugee status were processed. (The Australian, 3 December) <http://bit.ly/Vq54hl>

Sri Lankan asylum seekers challenge Australia deportation

A group of 56 Sri Lankan asylum-seekers have challenged their deportation from Australia, claiming the government ignored pleas that they risked persecution back home, refugee advocates said Tuesday. Australia has sent more than 500 Sri Lankan men back to Colombo involuntarily since August, deeming them economic migrants. (7 News, 4 December)

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/-/world/15550127/sri-lankan-asylum-seekers-challenge-australia-deportation/>

Bowen agrees to process repleved Tamils' claims

Immigration minister Chris Bowen has agreed to process 57 Tamil asylum seekers' protection claims a day after they were due to be deported. High Court Justice John Heydon granted the asylum seekers a last-minute injunction to their deportation on Monday, after they alleged Mr Bowen was trying to send them back to Sri Lanka without any proper inquiry or any cause. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 December) <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/bowen-agrees-to-process-repleved-tamils-claims-20121205-2avw5.html>

Darwin asylum seekers flown interstate

About 400 asylum seekers have been released from Darwin detention centres into the community. They will be placed on bridging visas which forbid them from working, but will receive a basic welfare payment, a spokesman for the immigration department told AAP. The Refugee Council of Australia wrote to Immigration Minister Chris Bowen on Wednesday asking him to immediately suspend the forced return of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka. (The Herald Sun, 6 December)

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/darwin-asylum-seekers-get-visas/story-e6frf7kf-1226531313894>

Anger over Sri Lankans' deportation

The Refugee Council of Australia's chief executive has called on the government to urgently halt the forced deportation of Sri Lankan asylum seekers. Paul Power said there was compelling new evidence that members of the group were forcibly returned and denied the opportunity to have their claims for protection assessed. (The Age, 7 December)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/anger-over-sri-lankans-deportation-20121206-2ayd0.html>

Asylum denied, a penalty waits at home

A crumbling baroque clocktower built by the Dutch in 1672 stands sentry over Negombo prison in Colombo, Sri Lanka, looking west over the Laccadive Sea. This place, increasingly, is where the asylum journey to Australia ends. Australia has deported 750 Sri Lankans, about 650 against their will. The Refugee Council of Australia chief executive, Paul Power, said Australia did not know whether it was sending people back to harm. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 December)

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/asylum-denied-a-penalty-waits-at-home-20121207-2b0qi.html>

Nauru asylum seekers 'intimidated in self-harming

The Federal Opposition says a small group of Iranian asylum seekers in detention on Nauru are intimidating others into joining self-harm protests. Immigration spokesman Scott Morrison last week visited the island where asylum seekers are living in military-style tents while permanent accommodation is being built. (ABC News, 9 December)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-12-09/morrison-claims-asylum-seekers-intimidated-into-joining-protests/4417246>

Jakarta, Canberra to ratify rescue pact

Australia and Indonesia will sign an agreement on Tuesday that will boost cooperation in search and rescue operations involving asylum seekers. The agreement, mooted earlier in the year in the wake of a series of incidents in which hundreds of asylum seekers lost their lives, is expected to give Australian aircraft rapid clearance to enter Indonesian airspace. It also boosts maritime cooperation aimed at speeding up the response times of rescue agencies when dealing with incidents involving the safety of life at sea. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December)

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/jakarta-canberra-to-ratify-rescue-pact-20121210-2b5yu.html>

Government to defend right to indefinitely detain refugees

The federal government will defend its right to keep refugees in indefinite detention by claiming a High Court judgment in relation to one Sri Lankan asylum seeker does not apply to boat people. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 December)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/government-to-defend-right-to-indefinitely-detain-refugees-20121211-2b7ji.html>

Asylum seeker adviser quits

One of Australia's leading mental health experts has quit the Gillard government's advisory council on asylum seekers and detention after more than a decade, citing plans to indefinitely deny work rights to thousands of recent arrivals as "the last straw". Professor Harry Minas says the gap between his own views on how Australia should honour its international obligations and the direction of policy in recent months has simply become too wide - and continues to widen. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 December)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/asylum-seeker-adviser-quits-20121213-2bcnp.html>

Bowen responds to UN criticism of Nauru detention

Australia's Immigration Minister says offshore processing for asylum seekers is the right course of action, despite a damning United Nations report into conditions on Nauru. A report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has found Australia's 'no-advantage' concept for processing refugee claims is inconsistent with its responsibilities under the refugee convention. (Australia Network News, 15 December)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-12-15/an-bowen-defends-asylum-processing-on-nauru/4429846>

Refugee program sends 'right message': Bowen

A pilot program that gives asylum seekers with community ties a \$20,000 path into Australia will send the right message to economic refugees, Immigration Minister Chris Bowen says. "The message is there's another way to come to Australia. You don't have to get on a boat," Mr Bowen told Sky News on Saturday. The Refugee Council of Australia welcomed the trial but cited concerns the program may be primarily a cost-cutting measure for the government. (SBS World News Australia, 15 December)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1720865/Refugee-program-sends-right-message-Bowen>

Bowen defends refugee sponsorship fee

Immigration Minister Chris Bowen has defended the price-tag of the country's first private sponsorship program for refugees, with visa application fees ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000. Under the pilot program, to begin next year, community groups will be able to sponsor refugees with family and support networks in Australia. The Refugee Council of Australia has offered qualified support for the program, but says there are still concerns about the upfront visa application charge of between \$20,000 and \$30,000. (SBS World News Australia, 17 December)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1721289/Bowen-defends-refugee-sponsorship-costs>

Australia to cut aid to fund asylum seeker costs

The Federal Government has confirmed it is planning to divert hundreds of millions of dollars from foreign aid programs to fund costs associated with processing asylum seekers on the Australian mainland. Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr says \$375 million from the foreign aid budget will be used to pay for food and other costs for asylum seekers being processed in Australia. (ABC News, 18 December) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-12-17/australia-to-cut-aid-to-fund-asylum-seeker-costs/4432606>

Foreign aid shift draws protests: 'core' bodies safe, says government

The government has promised that "core payments" to non-government agencies and funding for groups critical to humanitarian crisis will not be hit by the diversion of up to \$375 million to support asylum seekers being processed in Australia. As protests grew, a spokesman for Foreign Minister Bob Carr said there would be "deferral or delay" in some aid spending. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 December) <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/foreign-aid-shift-draws-protests-20121218-2bl8o.html>

Australia helping Pakistan stop Hazara asylum seekers leaving

Australia's reported cooperation with Pakistan's intelligence agencies to stop Hazara asylum seekers from leaving the country is "questionable and sordid", Amnesty International says. It follows an investigation by the Global Mail which quoted Pakistani officials confirming that Australian Federal Police had encouraged a policy of racially profiling people from the Hazara community, suspected of preparing to flee the country. (Radio Australia, 20 December) <http://bit.ly/WrpWLq>

Year of an Invasion by sea

Having chalked up a runaway record for the biggest influx of asylum seekers in Australian history, the federal government insists it is making inroads into border protection. As the largest annual tally of asylum seekers ended yesterday - 277 boats carrying more than 17,000 people arrived in 2012 - Immigration Minister Chris Bowen's office said the government was only "partly committed" because the Houston expert panel's most controversial recommendation had not been fulfilled. (The Daily Telegraph, 1 January)

<http://www.news.com.au/national/year-of-an-invasion-by-sea/story-fndo4bst-1226545754449>

Immigration review exposes risk of failure

The crisis-ridden Immigration Department is poorly managed, its workers mistrust each other and its executives' financial illiteracy poses serious risks, an independent review has warned. The frank report, written by a panel of government and business specialists, also describes a culture of buck-passing, in which few staff take responsibility for problems. (The Age, 2 January)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/immigration-review-exposes-risk-of-failure-20130101-2c47s.html>

Asylum seekers write letters from Manus Island

Asylum seekers held at Australia's regional processing centre on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea have begun writing about conditions there, and their reasons for seeking protection. They hope the stories will raise public awareness of their situation, and lead to an improvement in their treatment. (SBS Radio World News, 3 January)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1724258/Asylum-seekers-write-letters-from-Manus-Island>

Refugees adrift in a dangerous sea

Another group of asylum seekers has been rescued off Indonesia after their boat broke down while travelling to Australia. The 46 people on the vessel were returned to Teluk Bayur in Padang on Wednesday after striking trouble earlier off the coast of West Sumatra. (The Daily Telegraph, 4 January)

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/refugees-adrift-in-a-dangerous-sea/story-e6freuy9-1226547332021>

Smuggled photos shed light on realities of Manus

The first pictures have emerged of daily life on Manus Island, taken in the camp and sent to refugee activists on the mainland. The Department of Immigration had released stock photographs of the island's processing camp, but since asylum seekers began to arrive in November, the media has been unable to access the camp to verify conditions. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 January)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/smuggled-photos-shed-light-on-realities-of-manus-20130104-2c8w0.html>

Cameras disabled after Manus Island photos revealed

Tablet computers for asylum seekers on Manus Island have had their camera functions removed days after Fairfax Media published photographs of life in the island's camp. The photographs, which were sent from the camp to the mainland without the knowledge of the Department of Immigration, showed conditions there are very basic. (The Age, 8 January)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/cameras-disabled-after-manus-island-photos-revealed-20130107-2ccu3.html>

PNG opposition leader to challenge Manus Island centre

Papua New Guinea's colourful opposition leader says the Australian Government's processing centre for asylum seekers on Manus Island is unconstitutional and he's planning to challenge its legality in court. Belden Namah says PNG law only allows the detention of people for lengthy periods if they've broken the law. But the Attorney-General says the asylum seekers on Manus Island have effectively consented to their detention. (ABC Radio AM, 9 January)

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2013/s3666209.htm>

Asylum seekers attempt escape amid claims of self-harm

A group of asylum seekers have tried to escape from Manus Island amid claims up to three refugees have attempted to commit suicide or self-harmed over conditions at the new offshore processing centre. (The Herald Sun, 14 January) <http://bit.ly/VyGULp>

Activists rap Australia's offshore processing of migrants

Human rights groups have strongly condemned conditions at Australia's two offshore processing centres for asylum seekers on the Pacific islands of Nauru and Manus. (IRIN News, 15 January)

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97243/Activists-rap-Australia-s-offshore-processing-of-migrants>

Birth behind bars for 'ASIO risk'

A Tamil woman locked in immigration detention for the term of her pregnancy after the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation branded her a security risk, has given birth to a boy. But the father will be prevented from seeing his son inside the detention residence, instead forced to abide by the regular visiting hours at the secure housing complex in Sydney where the mother and baby will be held. (The Age, 16 January)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/birth-behind-bars-for-asio-risk-20130115-2crww.html>

Big country, small heart

Amid the cold reality of life locked away in a detention centre, the sound of children at play is shocking but soothing. For those adults forced to live every day with the physical and psychological trauma of indefinite incarceration, it is a welcome, if fleeting, relief from a pitiful existence. Yet at the same time it is also a chilling reminder that the most innocent, the most loved and the most vulnerable people in

society, children, are being punished, and irreparably damaged, for the sins of their birth. (The Sunday Age, 20 January) <http://bit.ly/Wtzt2F>

Huts at high prices: the great Nauru rip-off

Taxpayers are paying more than the average rent in Sydney, and every capital in each Australian state, to lease private homes for immigration officials in Nauru. Nauruan families are being paid between \$522 and \$687 a week for basic two to four bedroom cottages. (The Daily Telegraph, 25 January) <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/huts-at-high-prices-the-great-nauru-housing-ripoff/story-e6frg6n6-1226561314137>

Akram Azimi is Young Australian of the Year

He fled Afghanistan with his mother and brother at the height of a bloody civil war, arriving in Australia a child refugee. Now, 25-year-old Akram Azimi is the 2013 Young Australian of the Year. (The Daily Telegraph, 25 January) <http://bit.ly/VyHkIt>

Hope fading for group on a flimsy raft

Four asylum seekers missing for four days off Christmas Island had strung a raft of inner tubes and bamboo together in a desperate bid to reach land after their refugee boat broke down. They left behind 15 passengers on their drifting boat which was intercepted by the navy more than 17 nautical miles north of the island on Friday. The government announced Border Protection Command officers had found the boat but omitted news that four asylum seekers were missing. (The Daily Telegraph, 29 January)

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/hope-fading-for-group-on-a-flimsy-raft/story-e6frg6n6-1226563817193>

Asylum seekers die after boat sinks off Indonesia

Indonesian authorities say two Sri Lankan asylum seekers have died while trying to get to Australia, but more than 20 others have been rescued from their crippled boat overnight. (ABC-TV, 29 January)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-01-29/asylum-seekers-die-after-boat-sinks-off-indonesia/4489686>

Date set for Manus centre court challenge

A visiting Australian MP says there is no evidence asylum seeker claims are being processed at the Manus Island detention centre, which faces a challenge to its establishment in Papua New Guinea's courts next month. Court officials in Port Moresby said on Wednesday an application to remove the centre, brought by PNG's opposition, will come before the national court on February 12 before Justice David Canning. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January)

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/date-set-for-manus-centre-court-challenge-20130130-2dkuu.html>

Asylum seekers 'aware' of deterrence value

Asylum seekers on Manus Island are "acutely aware" they are being used as examples in the Gillard government's deterrence policy, Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said on Wednesday. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/asylum-seekers-aware-of-deterrence-value-20130130-2djo4.html>