



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

18 March 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

Opposition's denial of appeal rights more punishment for asylum seekers

RCOA expressed disappointment with a Federal Opposition proposal to deny asylum seekers arriving by boat access to an independent review of their refugee claim. In a statement issued by President Phil Glendenning, RCOA said the removal of a legal safeguard, like the right to appeal an initial rejection for refugee status, had serious consequences for people who would face deportation after fleeing danger to seek asylum in Australia. It was also a contravention of the Refugee Convention which requires states not to discriminate against particular categories of asylum seekers. The statement called for a shift in the policy focus away from punishment to creating the safer pathways to protection and a fair process for all asylum seekers regardless of how they arrived in Australia. The statement is available at: http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130318_OppRRT.pdf

Violence in Quetta exacerbates pain of family separation for Hazara

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) called for greater Australian and international action in response to the increasing death toll from attacks on the Hazara community in Pakistan. In a statement to support of protests held in Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane, RCOA highlighted the anguish faced by Hazara community members separated from their families. The statement emphasised the link between the violence in Pakistan and asylum movements to Australia and drew attention to the restricted access to family reunion for asylum seekers arriving by boat. The full statement is available here: http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130225_Hazara.pdf

Campaign for asylum seekers to have the right to work

The Refugee Council of Australia has pledged its support for a campaign to secure work rights for asylum seekers in the community. Currently, work rights apply to some asylum seekers on bridging visas but denied to others under the Government's "no advantage" test. Details about the campaign, led by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, are available at: <http://righttowork.com.au/>

New RCOA policy briefs examine children in detention and ASIO security assessments

RCOA has issued the first installments of its Policy Brief series aimed at analysing critical issues in refugee and asylum policy. The first briefs focus on children in immigration detention and recognised refugees who face indefinite detention because of adverse ASIO security assessments. The children in detention brief notes that the number of children held in closed immigration detention facilities in Australia has reached an all-time high of 1221 as at 31 December, 2012. Read the Policy Brief at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/pb/PB1303-Children.pdf. The Policy Brief on the fate of 56 recognised refugees with adverse ASIO security assessments challenges the Australian Government's primary strategy of third-party resettlement and recommends alternatives to detention, legislative change to ensure ASIO security assessments can be meaningfully challenged, and publicly-available criteria to be made available. The brief is available at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/pb/PB1303-ASIO.pdf.

City of Ryde Council praised for positive leadership on refugees

Sydney's City of Ryde Council was praised by RCOA for showing positive leadership on welcoming refugees. At its March meeting, a motion was put forward by a councillor that attempted to draw City of

Ryde into the debate about asylum seekers living in Macquarie University accommodation. Before Council met, RCOA wrote to Ryde Mayor Ivan Petch to outline the issues around asylum seekers on bridging visas. The Council resolved to take up an offer to meet with RCOA and investigate further initiatives to welcome asylum seekers and refugees to the community. The RCOA media release is available at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130318_RydeCouncil.pdf. The RCOA letter to City of Ryde Council can be found at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130312_RydeCityLetter.pdf. Minutes from the Council meeting can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/145U4tg>.

Settlement Policy Network teleconference on family reunion

The first Settlement Policy Network teleconference of 2013 will be held on Wednesday 3 April at 2:00pm AEDT, focusing on the topic *Humanitarian family reunion: Challenges and opportunities in a new policy context*. The teleconference will discuss the implications of recent changes to Australia's policies on humanitarian family reunion, stemming from the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers. The aim of the teleconference is to assist service providers to offer constructive advice to clients on family reunion options. The teleconference will also provide an opportunity to discuss issues and challenges faced by refugee and humanitarian entrants seeking to reunite with their families through the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and the family stream of the Migration Program. An agenda and background paper for the teleconference, along with details on how to get involved, can be found at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/spn.php>.

Be heard at the 2013 UNHCR-NGO Consultations

Each year, representatives of RCOA and other Australian NGOs and academics involved in international advocacy on refugee issues travel to Geneva as the Australian Refugee Rights Alliance (ARRA) to participate in the annual consultations between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs from around the world. ARRA is seeking feedback from individuals and refugee community groups on current issues of concern for people living in refugee situations overseas, which ARRA should consider raising with UNHCR at the consultations. For further details and to download a submission form, go to <http://www.arra.org.au/index.php?page=submissions>.

Criticism of Australia-New Zealand refugee deal

The Refugee Council of Australia shares concerns expressed by the International Detention Coalition (IDC) and the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) over the recent announcement by the New Zealand government to take 150 refugees annually from Australia, potentially from the offshore detention centres of Nauru and Manus Island. Read the joint statement here: <http://bit.ly/11RiqGM>

UNHCR resettlement paper

Margaret Piper, RCOA's former Executive Director (1991-2005), our current CEO Paul Power and Dr Graham Thom of Amnesty International have worked together to produce a research paper "Refugee Resettlement: 2012 and Beyond". The paper reviews recent developments in UNHCR's use of resettlement as well as current issues involved for countries implementing resettlement programs. The paper, produced in collaboration with the University of Sydney, has been published by UNHCR and is available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/510faac32.html>

Strong recommendation against detention of children

A Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) report has urged countries to stop the immigration detention of children, urging states to "expeditiously and completely cease the detention of children on the basis of their immigration status." The Refugee Council of Australia has joined a range of organisations include the International Detention Coalition and Chilout to campaign for an end to the immigration detention in children. Recent detention figures show the number of children in locked facilities at an all-time high of 1221. In October 2010, the Australian Government said it would remove most children out of immigration detention facilities and into the community. However, the number of children being held in closed detention facilities has increased significantly in recent months, increasing the potential long-term mental health damage to children. Read the full report here: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/ReportDGDChildrenAndMigration2012.pdf>

RCOA position vacant: Administration and Membership Officer

RCOA is advertising for an Administration and Membership Officer, based in the Sydney office. For more information about the position, see <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/job.php>. Applications close

5:00pm Monday 8 April. Suitably qualified people, including those of refugee background, are encouraged to apply.

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

A Taste of Harmony

Monday 18 to Sunday 24 March, Australia-wide

Funded by the Scanlon Foundation, A Taste of Harmony celebrates diversity in Australian workplaces by encouraging colleagues to share food and stories from different cultural backgrounds. Workplaces are asked to register and then organise a lunch or afternoon/morning tea and encourage workers to bring a dish that represents their cultural background or from a culture they might not have tried before. At the event workers are encouraged to share stories of their cultural background.

Details: for further details and to register an event, visit <http://www.tasteofharmony.org.au>.

Foundation House seminar: The impact of long-term detention

Wednesday 20 March, Brunswick VIC

This session will provide an overview of current research, and explore the impact of detention and the asylum seeking process for refugee survivors of torture and trauma. It will be of interest to those working in counselling, health, community and educational settings. Light refreshments provided.

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

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

Wednesday 20 March, Albury 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; Library Museum Albury, Meeting Room 2, 553 Kiewa Street, Albury; register online at <http://www.startts.org.au>.

STARTTS workshop: 'Accidental' counsellors: Responding to refugee trauma-related behaviours (for non-counsellors)

Thursday 21 March, Carramar NSW

This one-day workshop has been designed to give workers not trained as counsellors some basic tips and skills for how to recognise and deal with difficult behaviours in refugee trauma clients in the workplace. It will give you practical skills in containing situations such as: disclosure of traumatic stories; sadness and tearfulness; anger outbursts; dissociation; panic attacks and suicide threats, and an understanding of appropriate follow-up referrals.

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>.

Reducing race-based discrimination for health

Thursday 21 and Friday 22 March, Carlton VIC

Hosted by VicHealth, this two-day short course will equip participants to build leadership and skills in organisations and communities to address race-based discrimination and to develop a greater appreciation of the benefits of cultural diversity. It has been designed for workers from a diverse range

of sectors including: health, community, education, state and local government, not for profit agencies, social policy, arts workplaces, justice, housing and sports.

Details: 9:30am-4:30pm; Seminar Rooms 1 & 2, Ground Floor, 15-31 Pelham Street, Carlton; register by 7 March at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au; for further details, contact Caitlin Dunlop at cdunlop@vichealth.vic.gov.au.

Dialogue with Arab Women: Building Peace, Achieving Justice?

Thursday 21 March, Sydney NSW

In partnership with the Australian Arab Women's Dialogue and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the Sydney Peace Foundation is hosting a panel discussion facilitated by Prof Stuart Rees with: Ms Zeina Daccache (Lebanon), clinical psychologist, drama therapist, actress and filmmaker; Ms Manal Elattir (Morocco), CEO of Social Enterprise for Women's Economic Empowerment and founder of the first NGO in social entrepreneurship in Morocco; and Dr Houriya al-Kazim (United Arab Emirates), Medical Director and Consultant Breast Surgeon, Well Woman Clinic and founder of "Breast Friends". These three representatives are part of a nine member delegation which includes key women leaders from Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. This is the first dialogue of its kind in Australia.

Details: 12:30pm-1:30pm; Eastern Avenue Lecture Theatre, University of Sydney; to register, e-mail peace.foundation@sydney.edu.au.

Limbo 24/7: Tales from the cages of detention

Thursday 21 March to Wednesday 27 March, Northcote VIC

Presented by Kommonground, this collaborative installation of film, digital storytelling and live performance captures the lived experiences of asylum seekers. Profits will be donated to the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

Details: tickets \$14.00 (\$10.00 concession or for groups of six or more) for adults and \$5.00 for children under 12; opening night live show 7:00pm 21 March; Studio 2, Northcote Town Hall, 189 High Street, Northcote; for further details and to book tickets, visit http://www.northcotetownhall.com.au/Page/page.asp?Page_Id=1165&h=0.

Multilingual Poetry Slam

Thursday 21 March, Sydney NSW

This event celebrating Harmony Day and World Poetry Day invites participants to perform poems, stories, songs, lyrics or monologues in their own language. Judges chosen from the audience will pick a slam winner to take home the grand prize.

Details: 12:30pm-3:00pm; Barnet Long Room, Customs House, 31 Alfred Street, Circular Quay; if you are interested in performing, e-mail info@wordtravels.info; if you are interested in attending, e-mail sng@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au; for further details, visit http://www.facebook.com/events/346874392097433/?notif_t=plan_user_joined.

Voices In Exile: Panoptic Perspectives

Thursday 21 and Friday 22 March, Sydney NSW

Panoptic Perspectives is a two-day film event organised by scholars from institutions in Sydney and Canberra to highlight issues relating to North Korea. The event will feature film screenings and discussions with guest speakers, including Park Jungbum, director of the award-winning film "The Journals of Musan".

Details: tickets \$10.00 per day (students \$5.00); first day from 2:30pm at Cheil Church, cnr Concord and Sydney Roads, Concord; second day from 12:00pm at the Architecture Lecture Theatre, University of Sydney; for further details, e-mail nkfilmfest@gmail.com or visit <http://northkoreafilmfest.wordpress.com/2013/03/05/programme-available-for-download>.

Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul

Friday 22 March to Sunday 28 July, Carlton VIC

Visiting Australia for the first time, this exhibition, with more than 230 priceless treasures, some thousands of years old, offers a rare opportunity to discover the surprising, untold story of the long and extraordinarily rich culture that is Afghanistan. For years these artefacts were thought lost or destroyed as war and instability shook the country. In 2003, they were uncovered from vaults in the central bank of the presidential palace, where they had been placed in secrecy by a few courageous staff from the

National Museum, Kabul. The exhibition will feature precious artefacts of gold, bronze and stone sculptures, ivories, painted glassware and other ancient works of art.

Details: tickets \$24.00 (\$16.00 concession, \$14.00 child; further discounts for museum members) include entry to the museum; 10:00am-5:00pm daily; Melbourne Museum, 11 Nicholson Street, Carlton; for further information and to purchase tickets, call 13 11 02 or visit <http://museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/whatson/coming-soon/afghanistan>.

Climate Change and Forced Migration: The Limits of International Law

Friday 22 March, Sydney NSW

In this presentation, Professor Jane McAdam will examine the extent to which international law can assist people displaced across borders by the impacts of climate change. She will also discuss a new initiative, led by the governments of Norway and Switzerland, to develop a global guiding framework on this issue. Drinks and nibbles will be provided.

Details: 4:00pm-5:30pm; Climate Change Research Centre, Level 4, Mathews Building, Kensington Campus, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Harmony Day Festival 2013

Saturday 23 March, Ipswich QLD

Organised by the World Harmony Society, this event will feature stalls, rides, international foods, cultural workshops, free face painting, multicultural performances, martial arts performances, fireworks and sound and light shows. All profits will benefit disaster victims through the Ipswich Mayor's flood appeal.

Details: 3:00pm-9:00pm; Robelle Domain, Education City Drive, Springfield Central; for further details, call 0410567618, 0403 321 309 or 0401 742 649, or visit <http://www.worldharmonysociety.org>.

Freedom Song concert

Saturday 23 March, Adelaide SA

Presented by the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia, this concert will feature performers from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

Details: tickets \$20.00 for adult (\$12.00 concession), \$10.00 for children and \$30.00 for a family of two adults and two children; 7:00pm; Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide; to book tickets, call 13 12 46 or visit www.bass.net.au.

Wyndham Multicultural Flesta

Sunday 24 March, Werribee VIC

A celebration of cultural diversity featuring multicultural performances and activities.

Details: 12:00pm-4:00pm; Station Place, Werribee; for further details, call (03) 9742 4013.

CEH training workshop: Writing for cross-cultural communication

Wednesday 27 March, Richmond VIC

Hosted by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH), this workshop is designed for anyone who writes or prepares material for audiences with low English language proficiency. It will help participants to identify appropriate languages, craft reader-friendly content, prepare material for translation and negotiate the complexities of the translation process.

Details: \$150.00 includes morning tea and lunch; 9:15am-1:00pm; North Richmond Community Health, 23 Lennox Street, Richmond; register online at <http://centreceh.wufoo.eu/forms/writing-for-crosscultural-communication>; for further information, call (03) 9481 9929 or e-mail <mailto:enquiries@ceh.org.au>.

Foundation House workshop: Working with Asylum Seekers

Thursday 28 March, Brunswick VIC

This one-day workshop aims to deepen the knowledge of staff working with asylum seekers regarding the impact of torture and trauma, and related experiences. It provides an overview of the Foundation House framework for understanding and addressing the effects of persecution and human rights violations, and provides a basis for developing appropriate support and service provision for people from this background. It will assist with identifying people at risk of developing persistent problems, and discuss referral to Foundation House and other services. Coffee, tea and snacks provided.

Details: \$210.00; 9:30am-4:00pm; Foundation House, 6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick; register online at www.trybooking.com/CGAL; for registration enquiries, call (03) 9389 8965 or e-mail pdregistrations@foundationhouse.org.au.

Free STARTTS workshop for community organisations: 'Accidental' counsellors: Community development with refugee communities

Thursday 4 April, Auburn NSW

State terrorism and organised violence target the very essence of community relationships. When relationships are affected communities fragment and a lack of trust affects social interactions. This very informative one-day workshop is designed to address the impact of trauma and state terrorism on communities and provide guidance for liaising with refugee groups.

Details: STARTTS, Level 1, 44-50 Auburn Road, Auburn; for further information or to register, contact Patrick Baffoun on (02) 9794 1900 or Patrick.Baffoun@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.

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

Thursday 4 April, Melbourne VIC

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: \$170.00 per person; 9:30am-4:00pm; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne; to register, call 1300 829 335, e-mail info@cwme.org.au or visit www.cwme.org.au.

Premier's Harmony Dinner 2013

Wednesday 10 April, Pyrmont NSW

Hosted by the Hon Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities and the Hon Barry O'Farrell MP, Premier of New South Wales, this evening event will celebrate cultural diversity with an array of cultural performances and presentations to significant members of the multicultural community, and will provide valuable networking opportunities. The recipients of the NSW Premier's Multicultural Community Medals will be announced at the dinner along with inductees to the Multicultural Honour Roll, established at the inaugural Premier's Harmony Dinner in 2012. ABC journalist Jeremy Fernandez will MC the evening.

Details: tickets \$85.00 (\$800.00 for tables of 10); 6:30pm-10:30pm; Doltone House, Darling Island Wharf, 48 Pirrama Road, Pyrmont; for further details and to book tickets, visit <http://www.multiculturalnsw.com.au/13/premier-s-harmony-dinner>.

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

Thursday 11 April, 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>.

RIDE for Refugees Sydney

Saturday 13 April, Horsley Park NSW

An initiative of International Teams, RIDE for Refugees Australia is a non-competitive, family-friendly cycling event designed to raise awareness and funds for refugee ministries both in Australia and around the world.

Details: 9:00am-3:00pm; Sydney International Equestrian Centre, Saxony Road, Horsley Park; for further details and to register, visit <https://rideforrefugees.com.au/sydney-2>.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Audit Office report on services in immigration detention

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has released a report into individual management services provided to people in immigration detention. The report highlights a range of systemic issues in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's management of the services provided to detainees that require attention to achieve better outcomes for individuals and for the management of the immigration detention network. The ANAO made four recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of DIAC's contract management of the services provided to people in immigration detention. Read the report here: <http://bit.ly/WkJfkr>

UNAMA report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has published its annual report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in 2012. Read the full report at: <http://bit.ly/Yk0hZY>

New Land, New Life documents refugee stories

A Federally-funded documentary, "New Land, New Life", commissioned by the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency, documents moving stories designed to counter negative stories about refugees. Watch the documentary here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=a0TZ_iRsV4s

Research on young refugee children in Victoria

A new study on young people of culturally and linguistically-diverse and refugee background has been undertaken by the Centre for Excellence for Child and family Welfare (CFECFW). In Australia there are more than 37,000 children and young people in out-of-home care, however the number of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or refugee background entering the child protection system is currently unknown. The study is available at: <http://bit.ly/15omWuo>

OPPORTUNITIES

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>.

Anti-Racism Training Workshops

Between March and June, RISE for Refugees is offering two-day Anti-Racism Training Workshops in Melbourne for staff and volunteers from organisations that regularly interact with a diverse range of individuals and communities who experience racism. Participants will be provided with techniques to identify and combat racism within institutional, organisational and interpersonal settings. The sessions will be held on 20 and 21 March, 17 and 18 April, 22 and 23 May and 26 and 27 June, between 9am and 5pm in the Melbourne CBD. Registration is \$125 which includes lunch and refreshments. View the promotional video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3HHEbt9djo> Further information is available at resistingracism@riserefugee.org or by visiting <https://docs.google.com/file/d/OB8oBCLooH-ZDTFB3UE1uX1owdEU/edit?pli=1> . Registration details are available at: <http://bit.ly/VRuK55>

FECCA Access and Equity survey

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is conducting Access and Equity consultations throughout Australia to learn about the experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The consultations will cover access to government services in employment, education, health, aged and care and more. As part of the process, FECCA has developed an online survey to inform the Government on how effective its services are and how they can be improved. The survey takes about five to 10 minutes to complete. Access the survey at: <https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=r0OhL46hITuPb-01JBPEsg#>

Call for paper for migration law conference

The Australian National University has issued a call for papers for a conference, "Unintended Consequences: the Impact of Migration Law and Policy", to be held in Canberra on 25 and 26 October.

The conference explores the unintended consequences of domestic migration policy, legislation or the application of relevant treaty obligations. ANU is inviting diverse critical and institutional perspectives on the legal challenges and social ramifications arising as a consequence of migration law and policy on: education; employment; human rights; political landscape; society & culture; and tourism. For more information, including the online Abstract Submission form, please go to: <http://law.anu.edu.au/conferences/unintended-consequences>
Closing date for submissions is 30 April, 2013. Accepted speakers will be eligible for a reduced conference registration rate.

Call for papers for FECCA conference

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) 2013 Conference will be held on the Gold Coast on 7 and 8 November 2013. Papers and possible workshops are being sought for a number of areas refugee resettlement, rural and regional settlement and settlement services. Abstracts are to be submitted via www.fecca2013.com and should be a maximum of 300 words. The closing date for abstract submissions is Friday 31 May 2013. For more information please visit the website or contact the Conference Secretariat on fecca2013@expertevents.com.au or (07) 3848 2100.

Nominations open for CRC Regional Advisory Councils

The Community Relations Commission For a Multicultural NSW is inviting nominations for community members to join a Regional Advisory Council. At least one place on each Regional Advisory Council is reserved for a young person aged 18-25. The Regional Advisory Councils are essential support structures which actively participate in the promotion of cultural diversity across the State. For more information about the Regional Advisory Councils, visit http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/regional_advisory_councils

Expressions of Interest can be submitted to the Commission throughout the year and will be considered once a position becomes available on the Regional Advisory Council for which you have nominated. To nominate, visit: http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1970/NOMINATION_FORM_-_Regional_Advisory_Council.pdf
If you have any questions about the Regional Advisory Councils please contact the Regional Coordinator, Neil Harbridge, on (02) 8255 6784 or via email at neil.harbridge@crc.nsw.gov.au

Youth leadership workshops in Western Sydney

The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) and the Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) are inviting one or two young people of refugee background per community organisation to attend a free two-day workshop on youth leadership. Applicants must be aged between 16 and 25 years. For more details contact STARTTS on (02) 9646 6636

NSW Multicultural Advantage Grants program

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) is inviting applications from not-for-profit organisations under the Multicultural Advantage Grants Program (Community Inclusion). Grants are available of up to \$20,000 for projects with a particular focus on mentoring and on inter-cultural and inter-faith activities that bring diverse groups of people together. Applications close 5pm, on Friday, 29 March. Further information and application forms are available at: http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/multicultural_advantage_grants_program

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

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

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

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

Asylum plans 'bad' precedent

Australia is setting a worrying international precedent that - if followed - would undermine the international protection system for asylum seekers, the UNHCR said on Thursday (The Age, 1 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/asylum-plans-bad-precedent-20130131-2dnll.html>

Plea to free refugee minors

The Catholic and Anglican churches want children at the Pontville detention centre to be moved into the community. Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission chairman Richard Chapman said there were major concerns about children being detained at the facility. (The Mercury, 2 February)

http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2013/02/02/371572_tasmania-news.html

Coalition to hand ASIO power over refugees

ASIO will have unfettered powers to brand refugees a security risk to Australia under a Coalition government - condemning more than 50 people presently held in detention to a legal black hole. (The Sun-Herald, 3 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/coalition-to-hand-asio-power-over-refugees-20130202-2drfd.html>

Grim UN report on conditions at Manus to pressure minister

A scathing report on conditions on Manus Island has urged the incoming immigration minister, Brendan O'Connor, to stop sending asylum seekers to the remote Papua New Guinea island until sweeping recommendations are considered. (The Age, 4 February)

<http://bit.ly/12kkhTC>

Coalition refugee plan in legal doubt

The United Nations and international law experts say a Coalition plan to block every Sri Lankan asylum seeker boat from reaching Australian waters, without first testing refugee claims, may breach international laws. (The Age, 5 February)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/coalition-refugee-plan-in-legal-doubt-20130204-2dulb.html>

Nurse likens Nauru to a concentration camp

A veteran nurse has likened conditions in the asylum seeker detention centre on Nauru to a concentration camp. Marianne Evers worked at the centre for three weeks late last year and says the conditions were completely appalling. (WA Today, 6 February)

<http://www.watoday.com.au/breaking-news-national/nurse-likens-nauru-to-concentration-camp-20130205-2dwwq.html>

Detainees at record levels

A record 10,000 asylum seekers were held in detention centres and in the Australian community in November, figures released by the immigration department reveal. It is the highest number recorded since mandatory detention began in 1990. (The Age, 6 February)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/detainees-at-record-level-20130205-2dwn6.html>

Gillard responds to refugee deal criticism

Australia and New Zealand are rejecting suggestions a deal resettling asylum seekers across the Tasman will encourage more boat people to make the treacherous journey. Under a deal announced at a Queenstown summit yesterday, 150 asylum seekers will be relocated to New Zealand annually from Australian detention centres. (The Sun-Herald, 10 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/gillard-responds-to-refugee-deal-criticism-20130209-2e4z1.html>

Refugee budget climbs \$1.3b

The Australian immigration budget has increased by \$1.3 billion over four years, as the government prepares to expand the humanitarian visa program to 20,000 each year. A Senate estimates hearing on Monday was told the Immigration Department's budget for humanitarian arrivals will rise by \$150 million this year alone, accounting for about \$24,000 for each person resettled in Australia under the expanded humanitarian program. (The Age, 12 February)

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/refugee-budget-climbs-13b-20130211-2e8wo.html>

Homestay boat billet gets the bullet

The federal government's much-heralded "homestay" program for asylum seekers has collapsed, with just four people who have arrived on boats currently staying with Australian families. (The Australian, 12 February)

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/homestay-boat-billet-gets-the-bullet/story-e6frg6n6-1226575731065>

Smuggled photos reveal grim Manus

More photographs have been smuggled out of the remote Manus Island processing camp in Papua New Guinea, showing afresh the grim conditions endured by asylum seekers in the camp. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/smuggled-photos-reveal-grim-manus-20130213-2ec82.html>

PNG court rejects Manus Injunction

Papua New Guinea's National Court has thrown out a bid to stop asylum seekers being sent to the Manus Island processing centre. On Thursday, Justice David Canning said he was not convinced a bid by PNG Opposition Leader Belden Namah to have the centre declared unconstitutional should be heard in his court. (The Age, 15 February)

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/png-court-rejects-manus-injunction-20130214-2efra.html>

Second breakout on Manus

There has been a second breakout at the Manus Island processing centre. Reports from asylum seekers within the camp suggested that about 40 men had jumped on the camp's fences, brandishing wooden sticks, before flattening a fence. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/second-breakout-on-manus-island-20130215-2ei6e.html>

Australia-bound Burmese asylum seekers rescued off coast of Sri Lanka

A boatload of Burmese nationals rescued from a sinking wooden craft off Sri Lanka's east coast after two months at sea had been trying to reach Australia, local police said overnight. (The Courier-Mail, 17 February) <http://bit.ly/YXQcEa>

Three asylum seekers break out of Nauru camp, briefly

Asylum seekers have staged the second breakout at an offshore processing centre in less than a week. On Monday morning, three asylum seekers, believed to be Iranians, breached the perimeter fence at the centre on Nauru before breaking free. They were caught and returned to the camp and a Department of Immigration spokesman said an investigation would be conducted into the incident. (The Age, 19 February) <http://bit.ly/YXQriD>

Traumatized children self-harming in detention

Children as young as nine have been involved in a spate of self-harm incidents in immigration detention facilities, despite child psychiatrists issuing repeated warnings over the past decade of the dangers of detaining children. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/traumatised-children-selfharming-in-detention-20130219-2epi7.html>

Manus detainee 'threatened to burn himself'

A detainee at the Manus Island detention centre in Papua New Guinea doused himself with fluid and threatened to set himself on fire, an MP says. The incident, which happened last Thursday, is being investigated by the Australian Department of Immigration and security firm G4S. (The Australian, 20 February) <http://bit.ly/ZzCvMA>

Donations pour in to ease plight on Manus Island

Moved by the stories of hardship in immigration detention centres, Australians are sending letters, parcels and goods to detainees to remind them they are not forgotten. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/donations-pour-in-to-ease-plight-on-manus-island-20130220-2ero6.html>

One hundred refugees perish on voyage: Immigration Minister

Almost 100 dead asylum seekers headed for Australia were thrown overboard one by one by starving shipmates - and new Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor admits he has no short-term solution to slow down the influx of boats. Mr O'Connor said 98 Burmese refugees died terrible deaths as they

drifted without food. Their boat was found off Sri Lanka this week. (The Australian, 21 February)
<http://bit.ly/13UbqnZ>

Push for solution after dozens die in asylum tragedy

Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor has urged the Coalition to rethink its opposition to the Malaysian solution, after the reported deaths of 98 asylum seekers who were trying to make their way to Indonesia or Australia. (ABC News, 21 February)
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-02-21/o27connor-pushes-for-asylum-solution-after-latest-deaths/4531508>

Navy rescues 91 as boat crisis deepens

The navy has averted a new tragedy at sea, rescuing 91 asylum seekers from their capsized boat, with the federal government now facing 370 arrivals a week and strife at Manus Island. (The Australian, 22 February)
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/navy-rescues-91-as-boat-crisis-deepens/story-e6frg6n6-1226583087637>

Sunk boat survivors in limbo

The 32 surviving Burmese asylum seekers - who were forced to throw nearly 100 dead shipmates overboard as their Australia-bound boat drifted in open seas off Sri Lanka - face a state of limbo, with the Burmese embassy so far refusing to claim them as citizens. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 February)
<http://www.smh.com.au/world/sunk-boat-survivors-in-limbo-20130221-2euco.html>

MP predicts Coalition destined to inherit 20,000 asylum cases

Shadow immigration minister Scott Morrison has predicted he will inherit a portfolio burdened with more than 20,000 asylum seekers on Australian soil and offshore processing centres, saying that it would take "years to fix". (The Age, 22 February)
<http://bit.ly/13oV7Uu>

\$2bn Triton drone plan to track asylum boats off Australia

Australia is set to sign up for \$2 billion worth of unmanned spy planes able to detect small, wooden people-smuggling boats. The Federal Government will send a letter of request for possible access to the United States Navy's development program for a high-flying, long-range pilotless aircraft called the Triton. (Perth Now, 22 February)
<http://bit.ly/15jM3Ph>

Australia pledges refugee help

Australia's Foreign Minister Bob Carr has pledged to help Thailand solve the problem of Rohingya migrants now being detained in shelters nationwide. Mr Carr said he had told his Thai counterpart Surapong Tovichakchaikul during talks in Bangkok yesterday that he offered assistance to Thailand in accommodating the problem. Mr Carr did not discuss any details about how Australia might help. (Bangkok Post, 22 February)
<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/337127/australia-pledges-refugee-help>

Cricketers discourage asylum seekers from sea journeys

Sri Lankan cricketers are fronting an advertising campaign by the Australian Government to discourage asylum seekers from taking boat journeys to Australia. Lasith Malinga and Muttiah Muralitharan have signed on to the campaign, which targets ethnic communities in Australia to tell their relatives not to risk their lives. (Radio Australia, 24 February)
<http://bit.ly/15doeZe>

Hell on Nauru revealed

Asylum seekers began to attempt suicide within a month of being sent to Nauru, internal Department of Immigration reports reveal. The reports are among a group of incident logs relating to the first three months of the asylum seeker processing centre's operation, and released to Fairfax Media under freedom-of-information laws. The documents show despair quickly escalated among detainees in the centre, with hunger strikes and self-harm becoming regular occurrences within a month. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 February)
<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/hell-on-nauru-revealed-20130224-2ezox.html>

Detainee protests futile, says PM

Hunger strikes and suicide attempts by asylum seekers on Nauru will not get them "anywhere", the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, said on Monday. Her hard line comes after reports by Fairfax Media that asylum seekers were attempting to hang themselves and self-harming within one month of arrival at Nauru. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February) <http://bit.ly/ZOMjOR>

Hazaras plea on failed refugee bids

The federal government has been urged to reassess the claims for refugee status of scores of asylum seekers from the Hazara ethnic minority in the light of escalating violence in Pakistan. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/hazaras-plea-on-failed-refugee-bids-20130225-2f22c.html>

Asylum seekers secret homes in the community

Many of the 9000 asylum seekers living in the community have been found sleeping in garages, on couches and in boarding houses. A group that houses some of those on bridging visas said asylum seekers were in inappropriate accommodation. Paul Bottrill, of House of Welcome in Carramar, said: "We have, in the last quarter, had 55 referrals - many were staying in backpacker hostels, sleeping on couches or in garages." (The Australian, 26 February)

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/asylum-seekers-secret-homes-in-community/story-e6frg6n6-1226585436764>

Suspend bridging visas: Opposition

The federal opposition has called on the government to suspend its asylum-seeker community release program after a would-be refugee was charged with sexual assault at a Sydney university. (news.com.au, 27 February) <http://bit.ly/Xk6liw>

'Behaviour' rules vilify asylum seekers: Lib

A Liberal backbencher has accused his party of "vilifying" asylum seekers after the Coalition immigration spokesman, Scott Morrison, called for "behaviour protocols" for those released into the community. Mr Morrison also said there should be mandatory notification of asylum seekers to local police and residents in the areas where they are housed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 February)

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/behaviour-rules-vilify-asylum-seekers-lib-20130227-2f6d4.html>