



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

19 December 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

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

NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Government suspends granting of new permanent visas to asylum seekers

The Australian Government's decision to suspend the granting of new permanent protection visas to asylum seekers was criticised by RCOA as a new low in Australia's treatment of some of the world's most vulnerable people. A directive to cap the number of permanent protection visas at 1650 means no further visas will be issued until July 2014, which RCOA President Phil Glendenning said would condemn anyone in the process of applying for refugee status, or asylum seekers asking for refugee protection, to a life of fear and uncertainty on bridging visas. "This unprecedented decision will also see Australia, a Refugee Convention signatory, refusing to grant refugee protection to any asylum seeker, including those who arrived by air on a valid visa," he said in a statement. Read more here http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/131204_VisaFreeze.pdf

Health advisory board's demise diminishes independent oversight

RCOA expressed concern at a Department of Immigration and Border Protection decision to disband a key advisory group responsible for overseeing the health of asylum seekers in Australia. In a statement, RCOA CEO Paul Power said replacing the Independent Health Advisory Group's multi-disciplinary medical expertise would be difficult and urged the Department to ensure there was an effective, independent voice to represent the general and mental health needs of asylum seekers. Read the statement here http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/131216_lhag.pdf

Concerns over Australia-Sri Lanka cooperation

RCOA was critical of Australia's decision to donate naval patrol boats to Sri Lanka, warning it was cooperating with a major source of refugees escaping serious human rights violations. In a statement, RCOA CEO Paul Power said the arrangement undermined Australia's credentials as a Refugee Convention signatory, and provided a distorted view of the regional cooperation needed to better protect refugees in the Asia-Pacific region. The statement also catalogued reports detailing Sri Lanka's human rights record. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/131118_SriLanka.pdf

RCOA Refugee Welcome Zone research shows strong support for refugees from local councils

The contribution made by Australia's local councils to welcome humanitarian arrivals has been documented in a research paper into the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative. The research sets out the aims and benefits of becoming a Refugee Welcome Zone and how other councils can become involved in the initiative. The paper highlights examples of best-practice from some of the 87 local councils that have built a culture of welcome for refugees by signing up as Refugee Welcome Zones. Access the paper at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/g/131219_RWZ.pdf

Plea for Australia to broaden horizons on asylum debate

In a speech to the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Annual General Meeting in Dandenong, RCOA CEO Paul Power contrasted the narrow debate about a small number of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat with international discussions on global refugee protection needs, particularly in response to the crisis in Syria where neighbouring countries are hosting millions of refugees. The speech also outlined the regional refugee protection challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region as well as

current concerns over the direction of asylum policy under the new Australian Government. Read the speech here http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/spch/131121_SMRC.pdf

Bright Ideas series features

The latest project to be featured in RCOA's "Bright Ideas" series is the Real Estate and NESAY Tips To Encourage Rental Success (RENTERS) Program, an initiative of NESAY Youth, Family and Community in Wangaratta, Victoria. The program helps people understand their rights and responsibilities in the private rental market and was recently adapted to assist newly-arrived Afghan community members in Shepparton. To view our summary of this project and other "Bright Ideas", visit <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/brightideas.php>.

Essays chart way forward on asylum policy

Australia 21 has published a collection of essays from a range of Australian leaders to chart a new way forward in refugee and asylum policy in Australia. "Refugees and asylum seekers: Finding a better way" includes contributions from RCOA CEO Paul Power which outlines the 10 incremental steps that need to be taken to improve refugee protection in the Asia-Pacific region. The collection also features articles by Jane McAdam, Erika Feller, Gillian Triggs, Louise Newman, David Corlett, Besmellah Rezaee and others. To download a free copy or to order a hard copy, visit <http://www.australia21.org.au/publication-archive/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-finding-a-better-way/#.Uq-q10JI2JU>

Victorian Government support for RCOA's work

The Victorian Government has acknowledged RCOA's support for Victoria's refugee communities, providing \$60,000 a year over two years under its Peak Multicultural Organisations Grants Program. The funding was announced by Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Nicholas Kotsiras who said: "The Victorian Coalition Government recognises the Refugee Council of Australia's outstanding service to the Victorian community, in forming collaborative, humane and innovative policy responses with humanitarian communities, and in building the capacity of Victoria's refugee sector." Read the statement here <http://bit.ly/1fnHuYL>

RCOA joins petition to preserve racial vilification protections

RCOA was one of more than 150 organisations to sign a joint letter urging Australia's Attorney-General George Brandis not to repeal the racial vilification protections in the *Racial Discrimination Act*. Read the media release and joint letter at: <http://bit.ly/1bxRgYf>

Information about SGP funding rounds

Recent Federal Government administrative changes have seen responsibility for settlement and multicultural policy and programs, including the Settlement Grants Program (SGP), move from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIPB) to the new Department of Social Services (DSS). As a result, DIPB has received a number of enquiries from the settlement sector about future SGP funding rounds, and has advised that updates will be made as soon as information becomes available.

Report unscrupulous migration agents

Prospective visa applicants are urged to report unscrupulous migration agents to the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA). Before engaging the services of a migration agent, applicants should ensure they are registered at the MARA website <https://www.mara.gov.au/>. Information on how to avoid migration fraud and how to make complaints about unregistered agents or unscrupulous operators see <http://www.immi.gov.au/migration-fraud/>

Support RCOA as an informed, independent voice on refugee policy

The work of the Refugee Council cannot survive without the financial support of people who share our belief in the importance of fair treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. In the 32 years of our organisation's existence, we have never been busier. With asylum seekers living in desperate circumstances in Australia, RCOA has established four new working groups to focus in detail on detention, offshore processing, legal aid and policies for asylum seekers in the community. In the words of one of our newest board members Abdul Karim Hekmat, a former refugee from Afghanistan who has experienced detention and life on a Temporary Protection Visa: "I believe it's crucially important to support the good work of RCOA which labours for justice, human rights and fairness and, most

importantly, amplifies refugee voices that are increasingly ignored by the Australian Government.” Please support us to continue our work as a credible and independent voice on refugee policy by visiting https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/donations/donation_form.phps

Follow us on 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

Faith, Fashion, Fusion: Muslim women's style in Australia

Until Thursday 9 January, Melbourne VIC

Australian Muslim women dress in diverse styles and are increasingly choosing to engage with global fashion trends while also expressing their faith. Faith, Fashion, Fusion explores an emerging modest fashion market and the work of a new generation of fashion designers, retailers and bloggers offering stylish clothing and fashion advice to Muslim women.

Details: museum entry \$10.00 (concession and children aged 3-16 free); 10:00am-5:00pm daily; Immigration Museum, Old Customs House, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne; for further details, visit <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/whatson/current-exhibitions/faith-fashion-fusion>

Karen New Year celebration

Saturday 11 January, Nakara NT

The Australia Karen Organisation NT is hosting a New Year celebration featuring traditional music and dancing, guest speakers and food.

Details: 2:00pm-5:00pm; Casuarina Baptist Church, 44 Dripstone Road, Nakara; for more information, contact Naw Kloo Say Soe on 0423 929 308.

Photographic exhibition: Seeking Refuge in Nhill

Until Tuesday 14 January, Melbourne VIC

Nhill is a small agricultural town in the semi-arid Wimmera region of central Victoria. It is a long way from the tropical Thai-Burma border where more than 140,000 refugees, many of them minority Karen people, live in UNHCR administered camps. Over the last four years a community of Karen refugees have settled in the township of Nhill, finding a welcoming home and new friends. This exhibition explores the journey, settlement, struggles and achievements of the Karen Community in Nhill.

Details: entry \$10.00 (concession and children 3-16 years free); daily 10:00am-5:00pm; Immigration Museum, Old Customs House, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne; for further details, visit <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/whatson/current-exhibitions/seeking-refuge-in-nhill/>.

Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul

Until Monday 27 January, South Brisbane QLD

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: museum open 9:30am-5:00pm daily; Queensland Museum South Bank, cnr Grey and Melbourne Streets, South Bank; for further information, visit <http://www.southbank.qm.qld.gov.au/Events+and+Exhibitions/Exhibitions/2013/09/Afghanistan>.

CEH workshop: Organisational health literacy

Wednesday 19 February, Richmond VIC

Hosted by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, this workshop provides methods to embed organisation-wide health literacy strategies into systems, operations, planning and workforce

development. Workshop participants will learn to identify organisational priority areas for health literacy action; contextualise health literacy within cultural responsiveness, quality improvement and diversity planning requirements; and apply health literacy strategies relative to the organisation's needs.

Details: \$150.00 per person; 9:15am-1:00pm; 23 Lennox Street, Richmond; to register, visit <https://centrech.wufoo.eu/forms/organisational-health-literacy-19-feb-14>.

STARTTS workshop: Core concepts in working with people from refugee backgrounds
Friday 21 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; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; for further information and to register, visit <http://www.startts.org.au/training>.

Aboriginal cultural appreciation for CALD workers
Thursday 27 February, Rooty Hill NSW

Presented by the Family Worker Training and Development Programme (FWTDP), this interactive one day workshop is designed for community sector service providers born overseas. The focus of this workshop is on providing participants with a better understanding of Australian colonial history and the impacts of government policy on Aboriginal people, past and present. The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to explore practical strategies to achieving more effective, culturally inclusive ways to build cross-cultural understanding in the community and to engage local Aboriginal Elders and families in relevant community events and programs.

Details: \$77.00 for members of FWTDP, \$132.00 for NGO non-members, \$165.00 for government; 8:45am-4:00pm; Rooty Hill RSL; for further details and to register, visit <http://fwtdp.org.au>.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

UNHCR reports on offshore facilities on Nauru and Manus Island

UNHCR has published reports on conditions faced by asylum seekers at the Regional Processing Centres established on Nauru and Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. The reports find that asylum seekers, transferred by Australia, are living in arbitrary detention under conditions that fail to meet international standards of treatment. Read the media release and its links to the two reports at: <http://bit.ly/1bs56Hj>

Amnesty International report on Manus Island conditions

Following a visit to the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre in November, Amnesty International has produced a report "This is Breaking People" which outlines conditions faced by asylum seekers and the impact on their mental health and human rights. The report is available through this link <http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/33587/>

New international refugee law centre established

The Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at the University of New South Wales brings a principled, human rights-based approach to refugee law and policy in Australia. The Centre, funded through the generosity of Andrew and Renata Kaldor, maintains core research programs in various aspects of refugee law, including international and comparative practices, human rights-based forms of protection (complementary protection), Australian administrative and constitutional law, statelessness, border security, regional protection and displacement linked to climate change and disasters. The Centre features fact sheets and short videos on Australian asylum law and policy, publications, news and events, a case database on Australian and New Zealand complementary protection decisions, as well as details about opportunities for study and internships. Read more at <http://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/>

Information kit to inform advocacy on refugee and asylum policy

The BRASS (Brisbane Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support) Network has produced an advocacy kit to help people communicate with Members of Parliament on humane and workable asylum policies. The resource includes contact details for Senators and MPs. Access the kit at <http://www.brassnetwork.org/get-involved/advocacy/>

Education resource focus on asylum seekers' stories

The Edmund Rice Centre's "Asylum Seekers and Refugees Education Resource" is a free 52-page education resource offering 35 cross-curricular activities to help increase awareness about human rights and advocacy. The activities apply to all levels in secondary school and some can be used with primary classes, students with special needs and community group discussions. To download the resource, go to www.erc.org.au/Resources_for_Schools/Asylum_Seekers_and_Refugees

Victorian Multicultural Commission Resources for schools

The VMC has developed a Teachers' Resource Kit, providing material for lesson plans, activities, excursions and events to explore themes around cultural diversity. The kit includes information on how to invite guest speakers and performers to your school, exploring family and local history and holding a class debate. To download a copy of the kit visit

<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/cultural-diversity-week/cultural-diversity-week-and-schools>

Study on migrant youth in Australia

Deakin and Monash universities, the Centre for Multicultural Youth and Australian Red Cross have collaborated on a research project on migrant youth in Australia. The report, "Migrant Youth in Australia: Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship" investigates the extent to which young people are involved in networks within and beyond their cultural community and how this impacts on their sense of belonging. To access the report, visit http://www.mhima.org.au/pdfs/MigrantYouthinAustralia_CMY.pdf

UNHCR Statistical Yearbook

The 2012 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook provides detailed insight into global trends, levels and patterns in populations under UNHCR's mandate. Access the guide at <http://www.unhcr.org/52a7213b9.html>

Australian refugee resettlement bibliography updated

Australian Policy Online has posted an updated version of the Australian refugee resettlement bibliography, which lists more than 1100 articles, books, reports and postgraduate dissertations about the settlement and resettlement of refugees in Australia over that period. Access the bibliography at <http://apo.org.au/files/Research/resettlement%20bibliography%2010%20December%202013.pdf>

DVD explains Legal Aid services

This DVD provides a brief introduction to Legal Aid NSW services for newly-arrived residents and is intended for use by local community groups and support workers. It contains an audiovisual presentation in each language. The DVD is available in Amharic, Arabic, Dinka, English, Juba Arabic, Dari/Farsi, Pushto, Somali, Swahili, Tigrinya, Burmese, Chin Hakka, Rohingya and Karen. Access the video at <http://www.youtube.com/user/LegalAidNSW/videos>

New Hazaragi and English interactive social hub blog and Facebook page

The South Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network has established an interactive Afghan Refugee Social Hub blog and connected Facebook page. The pages are in English and phonetic Hazaragi using the Roman alphabet which has been adopted by many newly-arrived Hazara students on social media. The Facebook page and blog will provide information on schooling, compulsory education, apprenticeships, jobs and careers. Read the blog at <http://sellen12334.wordpress.com/> and the Facebook page can be accessed at

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/SELLENs-Afghan-Refugee-Social-Hub/458775784204810?ref=hl>

"Under a Sudanese Star" tells story of refugee journey

"Under a Sudanese Star", a new book telling the story of Yai Atem and his settlement journey to Australia was recently launched at Coffs Harbour City Library. The book, written by Yai Atem, begins as a lost boy escaping war-torn Sudan during the civil war in 1983, follows his life in a refugee camp, resettlement in the United States in 2001 and his new life in Australia where he has been reunited with

his wife, a woman he became engaged to while in the refugee camp, and their three children. For more information and to obtain a copy of the book visit: <http://www.yaiatem.com/>

“A Country Too Far” adds to national asylum debate

Some of Australia’s finest writers have focused their creativity on the plight of asylum seekers in an anthology of fiction, memoir, poetry and essays titled “A Country Too Far”. Edited by award-winning writers Rosie Scott and Thomas Keneally, “A Country Too Far” features contributions from Anna Funder, Christos Tsiolkas, Elliot Perlman, Gail Jones, Raimond Gaita, Les Murray, Rodney Hall and Geraldine Brooks. For more details visit

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-Country-Too-Far-Anthology-Penguin/208504032661941>

Handbook on Internal Displacement

This Handbook issued by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNHCR provides relevant guidance to members of parliament on how best to address internal displacement as legislators and as national leaders to make their contribution towards ending internal displacement in their countries. Download the Handbook here <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5253ae454.html>

European Network on Statelessness Good Practice Guide

The Guide draws on good practice examples from states that already have dedicated statelessness determination procedures in place, and is intended to provide practical support to states considering the establishment of such a specific mechanism, or who wish to improve their existing system. The Guide also seeks to serve as a tool for civil society organisations and other stakeholders advocating for improved protection for stateless persons. Access the guide at <http://bit.ly/1bM7zzS>

Burundian refugees’ struggle to find protection in the Great Lakes region

The International Refugee Rights Initiative has launched a briefing paper documenting the struggle of Burundian refugees in finding protection in the Great Lakes region. Based on interviews conducted in Nakivale settlement in Uganda and discussions of the findings with the government of Uganda and UNHCR, the briefing tells the story of a small number of Burundian refugees and asylum seekers who have fled into a second phase of exile. Read the full paper here: <http://bit.ly/IRRI-paper>

Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon: a snapshot from summer 2013

This new report by Georgetown University and Institute for the Study of International Migration academics, presents the results of a month-long research trip to Jordan and Lebanon. Read the paper at <http://ccas.georgetown.edu/document/1242799693627/Syrian+Refugee+Report+Sept+2013.pdf>.

Council of Europe Issue Paper on asylum rights

This Issue Paper examines the right to leave a country and what it means both as a right in international human rights instruments and as interpreted by European courts and UN treaty bodies. The conclusions highlight the need for European states to examine or re-examine their migration laws and policies in order to fully align them with the European Convention on Human Rights. View the paper at <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2128255>

NSW multicultural interagency directory available

The Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW has produced a directory of multicultural inter-agencies relevant to Greater Sydney. Access the directory at

<http://www.eccnsw.org.au/News/October-2013/GSMI-Interagency-Directory-Now-Available.aspx>

Carer support resource available

Melbourne’s Migrant Information Centre has developed an information booklet about carer support services in a range of languages. This booklet provides information on services available to carers and how to access these services. This resource is now available in 22 languages and is readily available on our website. For more information and to access the links to various translations visit MIC’s Aged Care and Disability Services webpage at <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/agedcareclients.htm>

From Horror to Hope: addressing domestic violence in refugee communities

This training kit is designed for community and government workers who come into contact with refugee families resettled in Australia, who are either experiencing or at risk of experiencing, domestic and

family violence. The material will assist workers to understand the complexity of the refugee experience, and the ways in which this can make families vulnerable to domestic violence. Access the kit at <http://www.crr.unsw.edu.au/education-and-training-resources/from-horror-to-hope>

Resource helps health professionals working with refugee children

A new Canadian website for health professionals working with refugee children includes information on assessments and screenings, medical conditions, mental health, and culturally competent care. Access the site at <http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/>

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>.

John Gibson Award for Young Australian Migration Lawyer of the Year

Nominations are now open for the John Gibson AM Award for the Young Australian Migration Lawyer of the Year for 2014. John Gibson AM (1950-2012) was one of Australia's most admired advocates, working tirelessly to promote the rights of refugees and asylum seekers for over 25 years. John served as RCOA President between January 2006 and August 2012, was the founding chairperson of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (also known as Foundation House) and served as a Member (part-time) of the Refugee Review Tribunal for four years. John Gibson was acknowledged for his decades of service to refugees and asylum seekers with a posthumous award in the 2013 "for significant service to international relations as an advocate for human rights". Nominations close at 5.00pm on 1 February 2014. Contact nicole.eveston@lawcouncil.asn.au for details.

Senate Inquiry into bill to remove complementary protection

The Senate is holding an inquiry into a Government bill to remove the complementary protection legislation introduced by the previous government. The deadline for submissions to the inquiry into the *Migration Amendment (Regaining Control Over Australia's Protection Obligations) Bill 2013* is 23 January, 2014. Further information about the Bill and how to lodge submissions is available at http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Migration_Amendment_bill

Free on-line English course offers 50 lessons

A massive open online English course (MOOEC) is offering 50 lessons, free and on demand with more lessons to be added over the next year. The MOOEC will complement AMEP material. Apps for the lessons will be released shortly. Access the resource at <http://www.mooec.com/>

Have your say on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program

Each year the Australian Government formulates Australia's Humanitarian Program, taking into account the views of the Australian community, government agencies and the Office of the UNHCR. Written submissions on the Program for 2014-15 and future years can be sent to: Humanitarian Program submission, Assistant Secretary, Humanitarian Branch, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, PO Box 25, Belconnen, ACT, 2616. Submissions can also be sent to: humanitarian.submission@immi.gov.au. The deadline for submissions is Tuesday, 28 January 2014.

SA volunteers needed to assist asylum seekers

Mercy House of Welcome in Kilburn, Adelaide is seeking volunteers to support asylum seekers in the community. The organisation is helping break down the isolation faced by asylum seekers by offering a range of services including English classes, legal advice, budget counselling, a foodbank, accommodation support and gardening. Enquiries to Ali Roach on 0423 093 032 or at mwac@mercy.org.au

Interpreters and translators wanted in Melbourne and regional Victoria

The Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) is offering opportunities for accredited interpreters and translators across a range of languages and dialects. VITS provides services to federal and state government departments, community based organisations, hospitals, schools and police stations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. To find out more contact VITS at contractor.recruitment@vits.com.au or by calling (03) 9280 1941.

Nominations open for 2014 Nansen Refugee Award

UNHCR is seeking nominations from individuals and groups for the 2014 Nansen Refugee Award which honours outstanding instances of working with refugees, the internally displaced or stateless people. The deadline for submissions is 3 February, 2014. For more information and to submit your nomination, please visit <http://www.unhcr.org/nansen/503f2ecc6.html>

Australian Migration and Settlement Awards nominations open

Nominations are open for the 2014 Australian Migration and Settlement Awards. The national awards recognise and celebrate the work of individuals and organisations involved in assisting new migrants and refugees to settle into our community. Nominations are being sought for: Settlement Innovation; Case Worker of the Year; Diversity and the Law; Journalism Excellence; Business Inclusion; and Sports Leadership. Nominations can be made online at <http://www.migrationcouncil.org.au/awards>. Contact (02) 6162 0361 for enquiries. Nominations close midnight, 20 December, 2013. Award winners will be announced at a Gala Dinner, held in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra, in March 2014.

Have your say through FECCA's Access and Equity Survey

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is conducting its annual Access and Equity consultations to learn about the experiences of CALD people in accessing government services in a range of areas including employment, education, health and aged care. As part of the process, FECCA is seeking feedback through an online survey which will take about five to 10 minutes to complete. Access the survey here: <https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=p5visQLyGJYwEpJas3iz6w#>

Chance for refugees from regional and rural NSW to tell their stories

A project to collect oral histories of migrants and refugees who have arrived in Australia over the past 10 to 12 years is inviting contributions from people who have settled in regional and rural New South Wales. The interviews will be archived in the State Library of NSW for public access. Further details about the researcher Louise Whelan are available at <http://www.tgpublishing.com.au/collections/our-books/products/louise-whelan-new-settlers>. Contact Louise at photo@louisewhelan.com.au

Worldwide launch of LGBTI network

GALEAD, the first worldwide network dedicated to the LGBTI community is inviting organisations to become members. The network has been developed in partnership with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) and the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (GLISA). For more details visit <http://www.galead.com/>

Submissions sought for "New Community" Journal

The "New Community" journal is looking for submissions from organisations and people working with humanitarian arrivals and people who want to share their reflections on citizenship and migration. Writers do not need to be paid workers and contributions are encouraged from people with first-hand experience. Articles are due on 15 February, 2014. Enquiries and information about submission guidelines can be directed to Mish Colla at ncq@borderlands.org.au

Project to train refugees on NSW North Coast

A new project called MAKE SPACE has teamed up with Youth Directions and North Coast TAFE to create a workshop for refugees to learn about working with leather, making bags and selling them. Find out more about the project at www.pozible.com/makespace and www.facebook.com/makespaceworkshop

Call for abstracts: Supporting Families Symposium

Settlement Services International (SSI) is calling for abstracts for the Supporting Families Symposium which is being funded by the NSW Family and Community Services, which is scheduled to be held in June, 2014. Abstracts are due by Friday, 20 December. The symposium will focus on ways in which service providers can work together and in partnership with communities to support migrant and refugee families through the challenges of settlement and adjustment in a new country. The event will bring together a wide cross-section of presenters and participants from migrant, settlement and refugee services, mainstream child and family services, government agencies, and academia. For more information about the Call for Abstracts and the symposium, contact Thanh Nguyen at tnguyen@ssi.org.au, on 0402 771 390 or visit

<http://www.ssi.org.au/news/168-supporting-families-symposium-call-for-abstracts>

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 seekers in Darwin sent to Christmas Island after talking to media

Asylum seekers being held at one of Darwin's four immigration detention centres are now wary of talking to the media after two people who spoke to the ABC last week were sent to offshore detention. (ABC News, 1 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-01/asylum-seekers-who-spoke-to-media-sent-offshore/5062622>

Abbott claims fewer boats as PNG gears up for more

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill is confident the asylum-seeker detention centre on Manus Island could triple its capacity, despite Tony Abbott yesterday claiming victory in stopping the arrival of boats into Australian waters. (The Australian, 1 November) <http://bit.ly/1cjlM3B>

Immigration Minister announces no arrivals of asylum seekers in past week

The Federal Government says no asylum seekers have been transferred from boats to Australia over the past week, but it is refusing to disclose whether asylum seekers have been turned back to Indonesia. (ABC News, 1 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-01/scott-morrison-announces-no-asylum-seekers-arrived-this-week/5064096>

Sex assaults at Manus Island centre appear likely to go unpunished

An independent review appears to suggest that while some charges have been laid, the detainees at the facility have all since been transferred from Papua New Guinea, placing them "beyond the jurisdiction" of the country. (The Guardian, 1 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/01/sex-assaults-manus-island-unpunished>

Boys kept in isolation at Manus Island detention centre

Two unaccompanied teenage boys are being held in a small secure compound at Australia's Manus Island asylum camp and one, who has had mental health problems, has been under 24-hour surveillance, multiple sources have told Guardian Australia. (The Guardian, 4 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/03/boys-kept-in-isolation-at-manus-island-detention-centre>

Left calls for fresh debate by Labor on border protection

Bill Shorten faces a rearguard action from elements of Labor's Left to soften the party's position on border protection, after the West Australian branch of the party passed a resolution calling for the end of offshore processing. (The Australian, 5 November)

<http://bit.ly/1fbdMqo>

Asylum seeker two-month health screen casts doubt on two-day policy

Fresh doubts have been cast over the Coalition's 48-hour offshore turnaround for asylum seekers, with independent advice to the Immigration Department revealing screening for serious diseases can take up to two months before being completed. (The Guardian, 6 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/06/asylum-seeker-two-month-health-screen-casts-doubt-on-two-day-policy>

Call to end 'harsh' use of 'illegal' for boat arrivals

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has been urged to stop using the word "illegal" to describe asylum seekers, in an appeal signed by 138 organisations, which support the rights of refugees. (The Age, 6 November)

<http://bit.ly/1bQTUKp>

Asylum seeker children on Manus Island may not have a legal guardian

Two unaccompanied minors on Manus Island may not have a legal guardian after federal legislation in 2012 changed the minister's role for asylum seeker children sent offshore. (The Guardian, 7 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/07/asylum-seeker-children-on-manus-island-may-not-have-a-legal-guardian>

'Every day I am crying': boys held on Manus Island tell of their despair

Two unaccompanied teenage asylum seekers held on Manus island have described their sadness and fear at being held in isolation within a small compound in the regional processing centre. (The Guardian, 7 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/07/every-day-i-am-crying-manus>

Asylum seeker flown off Nauru to give birth in Aus fears children will die if returned

An asylum seeker who was flown from Nauru to give birth in Australia says she is afraid that her baby and young children will die if the family is sent back to the island. (ABC News, 8 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-08/asylum-seeker-flown-off-nauru-to-give-birth-in-australia-fears/5078154>

Prime Minister Tony Abbott backs down in asylum seeker stand-off with Indonesia

The Abbott government has blinked in its asylum seeker stand-off with Indonesia, ordering a Customs boat with up to 63 asylum seekers on board to Christmas Island, throwing its boats policy into disarray. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 November)

<http://bit.ly/1cuZSiD>

Scott Morrison twice rebuffed by Jakarta over asylum seeker boats

Jakarta has rejected Australian requests to send asylum seekers back to Indonesia on two occasions since the start of Operation Sovereign Borders, the Abbott government has revealed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 November) <http://bit.ly/1buLir7>

Indonesia's refusal to accept asylum boats 'very frustrating': Scott Morrison

Indonesia's refusal to accept the return of asylum seeker boats is "very frustrating", Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has said, in what appears to be a swipe at Australia's northern neighbours. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 November) <http://bit.ly/1cvOdBX>

Indonesia helps AFP stop boats

More than 1100 asylum-seekers have been stopped from coming to Australia by boat as the Australian Federal Police and its Indonesian counterpart greatly boost their offshore disruption activities. (The Australian, 12 November) <http://bit.ly/19aGRB7>

Abbott says Australia has not negotiated 'people swap' deal with Indonesia

The Government says it is not engaged in negotiating any "people swap" deals with Indonesia, but has conceded that talks are underway between the two countries about how to handle asylum seekers rescued by Australian ships. (ABC News, 12 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-12/abbott-says-no-deal-with-indonesia-on-asylum-seekers/5086594>

Asylum seeker mother kept from newborn baby in Brisbane

An asylum seeker who was moved off Nauru to give birth is being locked up for 18 hours a day in a detention centre in Brisbane while her week-old baby remains in hospital with respiratory problems. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 November) <http://bit.ly/1VS1zm>

Scott Morrison defends limiting asylum seeker's time with newborn baby

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has defended limiting an asylum seeker's contact with her sick newborn, saying the baby is in hospital and it is "common practice" for mothers not to stay overnight. (ABC News, 14 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-14/morrison-defends-limiting-asylum-seekers-time-with-baby/5091458>

Asylum policy of deterrence threatening families

Asylum seekers being detained on Christmas Island and off shore on Nauru and Manus Island are being subjected to a regime of coercion and intimidation and living in appalling conditions in a deliberate bid to force them to go home. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November) <http://bit.ly/18viNW7>

Asylum seekers: Sri Lankan navy officer Sanjeewa Annatugoda briefed Aus officials – The alleged linchpin of Sri Lanka's biggest people-smuggling racket was a decorated officer in the Sri Lanka Navy who briefed Australia's border protection chief and high commissioner on how to stop human trafficking. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November) <http://bit.ly/1LdkDn>

Asylum seekers in detention in Darwin for more than 48 hours

Asylum seekers who arrived on a boat into Darwin Harbour on Monday night are still being held in detention due to delays in medical clearances, and some show signs of having been tortured, Guardian Australia has learned. (The Guardian, 15 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/14/asylum-seekers-in-detention-in-darwin-for-more-than-48-hours>

Motion passed to force Immigration Minister to report asylum-seeker incidents at sea

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has refused to tell Parliament whether any asylum-seeker boats have been turned back to Indonesia - a Coalition election policy - prompting ridicule from Labor. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November) <http://bit.ly/1buQgEf>

Morrison confirms three unaccompanied minors held on Nauru

Three unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are being held on Nauru, immigration and border protection minister Scott Morrison confirmed on Friday. (The Guardian, 15 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/15/morrison-confirms-three-unaccompanied-minors-on-nauru>

Tony Abbott regrets mother-baby separation but no apology

The prime minister, Tony Abbott, has expressed regret that an asylum seeker mother was separated from her newborn baby but won't apologise for "what happens when people come to Australia illegally by boat". (The Guardian, 15 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/15/tony-abbott-regrets-mother-baby-separation-but-no-apology>

Bulk of drop in boat arrivals was under Labor

The bulk of the dramatic fall in asylum-seeker boat arrivals happened under Labor's last-ditch Papua New Guinea deal announced before the election campaign, a Fairfax Media analysis shows. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November) <http://bit.ly/J4Q0BD>

More Sri Lankan navy sailors suspected of people smuggling

More Sri Lankan navy sailors are under suspicion of people-smuggling and face possible arrest as Prime Minister Tony Abbott praised the country for its efforts to stamp out the illegal trade in people from the island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November) <http://bit.ly/iLdPx0>

Morrison orders review after asylum seeker kept from baby

The treatment of an asylum seeker locked up in detention for 18 hours a day while her week-old baby was in intensive care in hospital will be the subject of a review by the Immigration Department. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November) <http://bit.ly/1hHalFS>

Serco guard on Christmas Island fired for sex with asylum-seeker

Staff at Australia's immigration detention centres have undergone retraining after a guard provided by the private company Serco was sacked for having a sexual relationship with a detainee. (The Guardian, 16 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/16/serco-guard-christmas-island-sex-asylum>

Undercover journalists publish firsthand account of asylum seeker journey

An undercover journalist has detailed how he and a photographer posed as asylum seekers and took an epic journey from Afghanistan's shady currency markets to Jakarta and on to a flimsy, open-decked wooden boat that delivered 57 desperate people to Christmas Island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November) <http://bit.ly/1df2T5b>

Record boat arrivals under Labor led to rise in long-term asylum detainees

Record boat arrivals under Labor have led to record numbers of people languishing in detention for long periods of time, including a boy who was 15 years old when he was deported from Australia after being detained for 2½ years without independent review. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November)

<http://bit.ly/1gR309s>

Australia gifts Sri Lanka boats to tackle asylum-seekers

Australia on Sunday said it would give Sri Lanka two patrol boats to tackle people-smuggling operations in the Indian Ocean, hoping they can detect vessels before they leave the Asian nation's waters. (Global Post, 17 November)

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131117/australia-gifts-sri-lanka-boats-tackle-asylum-seekers>

Abbott defends Sri Lanka boat deal

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has defended a decision to gift two refurbished patrol boats to the Sri Lankan navy in efforts to stop people smugglers. (Herald Sun, 17 November)

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/aust-asylum-patrol-boats-for-sri-lanka/story-fni0xqll-1226761810749>

People smugglers selling passports and visas for entry by plane

An investigation by the ABC's Four Corners program has revealed evidence that people smugglers are selling the travel documents for up to \$16,000. (ABC News, 18 November)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-18/people-smugglers-visas-asylum-seekers-passports-australia/5098002>

Bowles says Immigration has reverted to use of 'illegal'

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has written to the senior bureaucrat in charge of his department, instructing him to refer to asylum-seekers who arrive in Australia by boat as "illegal" maritime arrivals. (The Australian, 19 November) <http://bit.ly/1hHbbrU>

No restrictions on patrol boats gifted to Sri Lanka

Australia's agreement with Sri Lanka for the handover of two patrol boats for border protection puts no restrictions on how they are used or limits on the weapons that can be fitted, Fairfax Media has confirmed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 November) <http://bit.ly/1hHbdzS>

Customs boat sunk asylum boat after towing it from Christmas Island

A Customs border protection vessel was forced to rescue 40 asylum seekers after it tore off the bow of their rickety timber boat about 20km from Christmas Island. (The Australian, 19 November)

<http://bit.ly/1bq0037>

Asylum seeker detention costs to soar beyond \$1 billion

The cost of detaining asylum seekers in Australia's Nauru and Manus Island detention centres is set to blow out beyond almost \$1 billion this financial year. (SBS News, 19 November)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/11/19/asylum-seeker-detention-costs-soar-beyond-1-million>

Australia has bought no Indonesian boats yet, military chief confirms

The military commander of the Abbott government's border protection operation says the Australian authorities have bought no Indonesian fishing boats since the change of government because Jakarta has made it clear it does not support the policy. (The Guardian, 19 November)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/19/australia-has-bought-no-indonesian-boats-yet-military-chief-confirms>

Department's new name to cost \$200,000

The Coalition's election win has led to another rebranding of the department formerly known as Immigration and Citizenship - at a cost of \$200,000 and rising. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November) <http://bit.ly/1cjN0Z5>

Morrison responds to Senate order with press releases

The Senate ordered Immigration Minister Scott Morrison to produce all documents relating to the secretive "on-water" aspects of Operation Sovereign Borders.

What it got was a pile of press releases. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November)

<http://bit.ly/1gR4H6M>

Unaccompanied teenage girl arrives at Nauru, claims refugee advocates

An unaccompanied teenage girl has been sent to Australia's detention centre on Nauru for processing, refugee advocates claim. (Herald Sun, 20 November) <http://bit.ly/1hHccOH>

Indonesia scuttles war on people smugglers

Indonesia has dramatically halted military ties with Australia and stopped co-operation in the fight against people smugglers in an angry backlash over spying claims. (Herald Sun, 21 November)

<http://bit.ly/1bqZqAM>

Morrison plays down Indonesia damage

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has played down the effects of Australia's degraded relationship with Indonesia on the government's border protection policy. (Brisbane Times, 22 November) <http://bit.ly/18NS0tO>

Asylum-seeker and newborn baby get court order to stop move to Nauru

The federal government will not send a two-week-old baby and his asylum-seeker family from Brisbane to Nauru before next week after lawyers sought a court order to stop their removal. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 November) <http://bit.ly/1cv5fy7>

Indon official to let asylum boats go

A senior Indonesian immigration official says he will no longer take measures to stop asylum seekers attempting to take boats to Australia as the fallout over the spying scandal continues. (Sky News, 23 November) <http://www.skynews.com.au/national/article.aspx?id=927352>

Sri Lankan boat arrivals mostly refugees

More than half the Sri Lankan asylum seekers arriving by boat are later found to be refugees, new figures show. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 November) <http://www.smh.com.au/world/sri-lankan-boat-arrivals-mostly-refugees-20131123-2y2rd.html#ixzz2lbtQ5D3b>

Children transferred from Nauru to Brisbane after health fears

A group of unaccompanied child asylum seekers have been transferred from Nauru to Brisbane amid concerns about their mental health and fears they may try to self harm. The medical evacuation, which began on Friday, occurred in part because the Nauruan government expressed safety concerns about the children. (The Age, 24 November) <http://bit.ly/1d49jUk>

Asylum struggle to survive

Asylum seekers living on bridging visas in WA are surviving on one meal a day and paying \$100 a week to share cramped bedrooms with three or four other people, according to local welfare agencies. (The West Australian, 24 November) <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/wa/19981984/asylum-struggle-to-survive/>

IDCs no longer record child births

The birth of children and clinical depression are no longer being formally reported as incidents in Australian detention centres, while self-harm events have been downgraded from critical to major, according to new guidelines from the detention service provider Serco. (The Guardian, 25 November) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/25/immigration-detention-centres-no-longer-formally-report-childbirth>

NSW Education Department funding changes hit ESL

Specialist support for teachers of English as a second language is being abolished in a move that academics and community groups say will disadvantage vulnerable refugee and migrant children. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 November) <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-education-department-funding-changes-hit-esl-support-program-20131124-2y41g.html>

Indonesia may give asylum boats free passage to Christmas Island

The Indonesian national police chief says security forces may allow boats carrying asylum seekers free passage through Indonesian waters on their way to Christmas Island as a diplomatic standoff keeps all co-operation between Indonesia and Australia on people smuggling on hold. (The Guardian, 25 November) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/25/indonesia-may-give-asylum-boats-free-passage-to-christmas-island>

Asylum seeker baby Farus is an Australian, lawyers argue

Farus, the baby who became an emblem of the Abbott government's hard-line approach to asylum seekers, should not be sent to detention in Nauru because he is Australian, lawyers will argue. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 November) <http://bit.ly/19up7NB>

Go Back To Where You Came From wins International Emmy

The controversial Australian documentary series, Go Back To Where You Came From, has won one of the world's most prestigious TV awards, the International Emmy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 November) <http://bit.ly/19aOeZw>

UN chides Australia over asylum policy

The United Nations slammed Australia's treatment of asylum seekers on remote Pacific islands, saying conditions there had worsened as political parties competed to appear tougher on border security. (The Wall Street Journal, 27 November)
<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20131127-700979.html?dsk=y>

Australia says UN criticism of Pacific camps 'overstated'

Australia on Wednesday rejected United Nations criticism of the Pacific island camps it uses for asylum-seekers, with Immigration Minister Scott Morrison calling the complaints "quite overstated". (Global Post, 27 November)
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131127/australia-says-un-criticism-pacific-camps-overstated>

Aung San Suu Kyi wants mercy for Rohingya seeking asylum

Australia's rule of law "must be tempered by mercy" when dealing with asylum seekers such as the Rohingya child born in a Brisbane hospital to parents fighting to prevent their transfer to Nauru, Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said in Sydney on Wednesday evening. (The Guardian, 28 November)
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/27/suu-kyi-asylum-burma-australia-rohingya>

Morrison refuses to discuss strip searches

Immigration minister Scott Morrison is refusing to say if asylum seekers in offshore detention will be strip searched under enhanced security measures. (SBS News, 29 November)
<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/11/29/boat-arrivals-continue-slow>

Scott Morrison concedes Nauru family facilities 'underprepared'

The immigration and border protection minister has conceded that family facilities on Nauru have been left "underprepared" and "underfunded" by the previous government, while he continues to transfer families and children offshore. (The Guardian, 29 November)
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/29/scott-morrison-family-facilities-nauru>

Asylum seeker family allowed to stay in Australia temporarily

The Federal Court has given a temporary reprieve to an asylum seeker family who wants to remain in Brisbane to access medical treatment for their sick newborn son. (ABC News, 29 November)
<http://bit.ly/1hHe9fP>

Greens urge Labor to back move to challenge re-introduced TPVs

The Greens are urging Labor to back their challenge over the recently re-introduced Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). (ABC News, 30 November)
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-30/greens-urge-labor-to-back-move-to-challenge-tpv/5126658>