



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

7 August 2014

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

Friends come to our aid in a time of need

On 30 May, RCOA launched a public appeal for financial support after Immigration Minister Scott Morrison removed our organisation's core funding two weeks after allocating funds in the Federal Budget. We are very grateful for the generous public response which has enabled us to cover the \$140,000 in lost core funding for 2014-15 and has given us another \$140,000 for current and future programs. Donations came from all corners of the country, with many donors expressing their outrage at the Minister's decision and their fears for other organisations involved in policy development and research. We will keep faith with our donors by being even more active in community education, policy development and representation in 2014-15. We will continue to seek public financial support because we now have to rely on donations and membership fees for most of our income – and we are determined to remain focused on being a credible and strong community voice for sound refugee policy. Thank you to the many people who donated, those who promoted our cause to friends and through social media and the organisations which made public statements or wrote letters about the removal of our funding including Australian Council of Social Service, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network. To help us continue our work, please go to https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/donations/donation_form.php or view our new membership brochure at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/a/agm/2014_Brochure.pdf

Australia's answers on return of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka unsatisfactory

RCOA was appalled by Australia's decision to return 41 asylum seekers to Sri Lanka after intercepting a boat on the high seas. In a statement, RCOA President Phil Glendenning expressed concern for the safety of the asylum seekers and alarm at Australia's close ties with a Sri Lankan government under a United Nations Human Rights Council investigation into alleged war crimes and human rights abuses. Mr Glendenning said the Government's use of "enhanced screening" to interview asylum seekers was an Orwellian concept that seriously hampered the ability of decision makers to thoroughly assess a person's claim for refugee protection. "There is nothing enhanced about the process. It's stripped back to ensure it is almost impossible for people whose protection claims need further examination, to receive a fair hearing." Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140707_SLReturn.pdf. RCOA also issued an earlier statement about Australia's actions on the high seas which can be accessed at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140701_AylumSL.pdf. After a month at sea, a further 157 asylum seekers were transferred to the Curtin Immigration Detention Centre in remote Western Australia, pending the outcome of a High Court decision lodged on their behalf. RCOA was critical of the Australian Government's decision to grant Indian consular officials access to the asylum seekers without testing their claims for refugee status. In issuing a statement, RCOA also challenged Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's claim that it was "absurd and offensive" to suggest people could be persecuted in India, pointing out that his own department's figures confirmed that Australia had granted refugee protection to 151 people from India in the five years to 30 June, 2013. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140729_Curtin157.pdf

Refugee community concerns raised with senior leadership of UNHCR

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

The concerns of refugee communities in Australia were well represented at UNHCR's recent global consultations with NGOs in Geneva. RCOA CEO Paul Power joined five refugee community representatives and a team of NGO leaders in Australia for the consultations, which drew 485 delegates from 82 countries. RCOA also arranged meetings with the directors and senior staff of five UNHCR bureaux to present concerns gathered through community consultations in Australia in preceding months. The meetings also provided an opportunity to share information and ideas with NGOs about policy changes in different countries, with delegates from many nations being deeply concerned about the international implications of recent policy changes in Australia. A report on the meetings, including a summary of the issues raised, can be found at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/urpt/2014_UNHCR_NGO.pdf

Syrian crisis dominates global dialogue on refugee resettlement

The scale of the Syrian refugee crisis and the vast unmet need for refugee resettlement were dominant themes when representatives of UNHCR, NGOs and governments from resettlement states gathered for the recent annual international dialogue on refugee resettlement. The 2014 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) was held in Geneva and hosted by Denmark, with Australia represented by refugee representative Joseph Youhana, five NGO reps (including Paul Power of RCOA) and representatives of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. A summary of the issues discussed and resettlement statistics released at the meeting can be found in RCOA's report of the meeting at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/urpt/ATCR_2014.pdf

Independent observer for screening process an important first step

RCOA endorsed a call by Independent Senator Nick Xenophon for an independent observer to be present during the "enhanced screening" interviews of asylum seekers undertaken by Australian immigration officials. In a statement, chief executive officer Paul Power said an independent observer was a bare minimum safeguard to introduce some transparency in a process heavily weighted against the rights of asylum seekers seeking refugee protection. RCOA said it was extremely concerned by the "enhanced screening" process which involves immigration department officials asking just four basic questions before determining the refugee status of asylum seekers. "Under this processing regime, asylum seekers are isolated from independent advice, support and information to assist them in navigating a complex legal system," Mr Power said. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140707_IndObserver.pdf

Appalling claims of cruelty to children in detention aired at inquiry

RCOA said allegations made at an Australian Human Right Commission inquiry of the mistreatment of children subject to mandatory detention on Christmas Island and Nauru amounted to systematic abuse if proven to be true. In a statement, RCOA chief executive officer said the allegations of mistreatment were appalling, while claims that a contractor requested the removal from a report of figures showing high rates of mental health damage among children must be immediately investigated and clarified by the Department of Immigration. Mr Power said: "If these claims are true, the only reasonable conclusion one can draw is that the Australian Government is bringing shame to the nation by overseeing a cruel and inhuman immigration detention system which damages and brutalises young lives." Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140731_Inquiry.pdf

Independent guardian needed to protect interests of child asylum seekers

RCOA welcomed the release of a new Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce report, "Protecting the Lonely Children", that recommends the replacement of the Immigration Minister as the guardian of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. In a statement, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said that for the past 25 years, successive governments have failed to act to resolve the situation in which the Immigration Minister is simultaneously responsible for the protection of unaccompanied asylum seeker children while also being the person responsible for deciding whether to detain them and whether to grant them a visa to remain in Australia. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140730_Children.pdf. The "Protecting the Lonely Children" report can be accessed at <http://www.australianchurchesrefugeetaskforce.com.au/protecting-the-lonely-children-report-launched/>

Government drops changes to Racial Discrimination Act

The Australian Government's decision to abandon proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act were welcomed by RCOA as an acknowledgement of the strong public support for laws to protect people from offensive, insulting and humiliating speech on the basis of race. In a statement, RCOA said its consultations with refugee communities had revealed that racism had a negative impact on the settlement of newly-arrived refugees, hindering access to housing, employment and participation in the community and posing a significant risk to social cohesion. In welcoming the leadership shown by the Prime Minister, RCOA also praised the Liberal MPs who spoke out against the proposed changes and urged community members to continue their advocacy with members of Parliament and Senators on important human rights issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers. Read the statement at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140806_RDA.pdf

Asia-Pacific NGOs condemn Australia's damaging asylum policies

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, representing 193 civil society organisations and individuals in 26 countries in the Asia Pacific region issued a strong condemnation of Australia's actions in returning 41 asylum seekers to Sri Lanka without properly assessing their claims for refugee protection. The statement said Australia's actions placed lives at risk in the region and seriously undermined regional efforts to provide better refugee protections. The statement said: "Smugglers thrive on exploiting desperate asylum seekers who can't find protection. When states fail to protect people from persecution and fail to protect those who have fled persecution, then refugees are forced to move in search of protection. Trying to deter refugees with harsh policies will not stop people trying to protect themselves. It just forces them into the hands of smugglers and makes smuggling more profitable". Read the full statement at <http://goo.gl/p2c73g>

Child asylum seekers locked up at higher rate than adults

A RCOA analysis of immigration detention statistics has found that child asylum seekers are more likely than their adult counterparts to be held by the Australian Government in a locked detention facility than in community alternatives. The analysis showed that 23% of the 4331 children in Australia's immigration detention system were locked up in facilities in Australia or Nauru while the proportion of adults in locked facilities was 18%. In a statement, Mr Power said RCOA conducted the analysis in response to a new "Beyond Detention" strategy released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Mr Power said the use of mandatory detention as a deterrent to people arriving by boat to seek asylum was one of the most unsuccessful of all Australian Government policies and remained in place despite a 20-fold increase in boat arrivals since its introduction. "One of the great mysteries of Australian immigration policy is why so much money has been wasted detaining people who pose no threat to anyone when the evidence of the pointlessness of the policy is so overwhelming," Mr Power said. Read the statement and the statistical analysis at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140709_DetentionStats.pdf

Looking beyond Australia's asylum debate to better regional answers for refugees

In an article published in Asylum Insight, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power has outlined the key 10 steps required to improve the protection of refugees in the Asia-Pacific region that could be implemented gradually, starting with the removal of barriers to refugee status determination through to promoting ratification of the Refugee Convention and harmonising asylum processes in the region. Read the article at <http://www.asyluminsight.com/asylum-commentary/#.U-LPAWN-gdy>

Refugee Welcome Zone Initiative nears milestone

Almost 100 local councils in Australia have signed on to the RCOA's Refugee Welcome Zone initiative. The latest councils to join include Banyule City in Melbourne, Palerang in regional New South Wales, Clarence City in Tasmania, Colac Otway Shire in Victoria and La Trobe in northern Tasmania, bringing the total number of Refugee Welcome Zones to 99. To find out more about the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative, visit: <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/g/rwz.php>

Bright Ideas profiles the First Home Project

The latest profile in our Bright Ideas series looks at the First Home Project, an initiative started by Perth-based pastor and activist Jarrod McKenna. The project provides medium-term affordable accommodation to recently-arrived families from refugee backgrounds until they settle and accumulate a rental history. Find out more about the First Home Project and other Bright Ideas at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/brightideas.php>

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

Still Alive: An exhibition of new artworks by refugees and asylum seekers

Monday 4 to Sunday 10 August, Darlinghurst NSW

'Still Alive' is an exhibition of original artworks by asylum seekers and refugees, created during ongoing workshops run by the Refugee Art Project in the Villawood detention centre and with refugee women in the community. All proceeds from the sale of original artwork will go directly to the artists.

Details: 11:00am-6:00pm daily; Stanley Street Gallery, 1/52-54 Stanley Street, Darlinghurst.

STARTTS workshop: Community development evaluation

Friday 8 August, Carramar NSW

Evaluation is integral to good community development and not something that should be left only to an outsider or an 'expert'. When done properly, evaluation facilitates an ongoing process of learning among all involved in community development projects. It also enables the continual development of projects and programs to be more effective and successful. This one-day workshop will introduce the central concepts of community development evaluation with refugee communities.

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>.

2nd Symposium on Bilingualism and Intercultural Communication

Saturday 9 August, Cabramatta NSW

The purpose of this workshop is to highlight the potentials and challenges of raising bilingual children. The presenters are leading international experts whose main area of expertise is childhood and community bilingualism. Participants of this workshop will have the opportunity to share their experiences and to learn from distinguished leaders in the field.

Details: 9:00am-3:00pm; Cabravale Leisure Centre, Broomfield Street, Cabramatta; for further details and to RSVP, contact Wanhua Wu on 0406 089 876 or Wanhua.Wu@uws.edu.au.

Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival 2014

Sunday 10 August, Toowoomba QLD

The Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival brings together multicultural organisations, schools, service clubs, welfare agencies, and performers to highlight the diversity of our communities. There will be performance stages, schools and cultural displays, music and dance performances, international food and market stalls, a health and wellness expo and a major marquee for service organisations with a variety of stalls. The theme of this year's festival is "One World Many Faces".

Details: entry \$5.00 (children free); Queens Park, Toowoomba.

Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair (MEFF)

Sunday 10 August, Fairfield NSW

MEFF marks the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. It is a showcase of Islamic unity in diversity and Australian multiculturalism in action, bringing together Muslims and non-Muslims, people from different cultural backgrounds, politicians, community leaders and imams. The festival will feature over 130 stalls selling a variety of food, clothing, jewellery, Islamic books, audio, video discs and computer software, toys and show bags, rides for children and cultural performances including martial arts displays, drama, songs, folk dances, HSC and community awards, congregation prayers in thousands, big screen display and other festivities.

Details: Fairfield Showground, Smithfield Road, Prairiewood; for further details, visit <http://www.meff.ifew.com>.

Premiere screening of 'Broken Time'

Tuesday 12 August, Bankstown NSW

'Broken Time' is a dramatised digital story, whose narrative structure focuses on the experiences of homelessness amongst unaccompanied humanitarian minors living in Sydney. It seeks to highlight common barriers for unaccompanied refugee youth including the lack of affordable, safe and secure housing, inconsistent or unsafe carer arrangements, social isolation, limited access to services and the trauma associated with being separated from family. Hosted by Settlement Services International and Yfoundations, this screening marks International Youth Day.

Details: 6:30pm-8:30pm; Bryan Brown Theatre, Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre, 80 Rickard Road, Bankstown; RSVP via <http://brokentimepremierescreening.eventbrite.com.au>.

Arab Film Festival

14 to 17 August (Sydney), 21 to 23 August (Melbourne) and 29 to 31 August (Canberra)

The Arab Film Festival aims to address the contemporary reality and frequent misrepresentation of Arab peoples and cultures by reflecting the complexity and diversity of the Arab experience. It also provides a critical space for alternative screen-based representations of Arab subjects, cultures and narratives.

Details: for further details and to book tickets, visit <http://arabfilmfestival.com.au>.

Launch of 'Alive and Out There' DVDs

Thursday 14 August, Sydney NSW

'Alive and Out There' is a theatre-based health promotion project addressing cancer and stigma in the Arabic, Greek and Macedonian speaking communities. The DVDs feature all three plays developed for this project as well as a multilingual discussion guide. Free DVDs will be available and morning tea is included.

Details: 9:45am for a 10:00am start; Claffy Theatre, Sydney Hospital, Macquarie Street, Sydney; RSVP to Sonya Georgievska via (02) 9382 8670 or sonya.georgievska@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

3rd Stakeholders' Forum on coordinating multilingual health campaigns

Thursday 14 August, Parramatta NSW

This forum will bring together representatives from government and non-government organisations to discuss strategies for coordinating, developing and disseminating health campaigns to migrant and refugee communities.

Details: 10:00am-12:00pm; River Room, Transcultural Mental Health Centre, Building 53, Cumberland Hospital Campus, 5 Fleet Street, North Parramatta; RSVP (essential) to Sam Shen via (02) 9816 0310 or fang.shen@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

40th anniversary of ECCV

Saturday 16 August, St Kilda VIC

This event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria will feature a three-course gala dinner, special guest speakers (including writer Alice Pung, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship the Hon Matthew Guy MLC and Deputy Leader of the Opposition the Hon James Merlino MLC) and live entertainment from the Asanti Dance Theatre and Carlito's Way.

Details: tickets \$128.50 per person or \$113.00 per person for a table of ten (concession \$97.50/87.50); 6:00pm-11:00pm; St Kilda Town Hall, cnr Brighton Road and Carlisle Street, St Kilda; to book tickets, go to <http://www.trybooking.com/EWVQ>.

2014 African Cultural and Dinner Nite

Saturday 16 August, Prestons NSW

The theme of this year's event is 'Bringing African-Australian communities together for greater initiatives'. The night will include cultural performances by African artists, a spotlight on Africa capacity building, inauguration of the Africa Community Initiative and guest speakers including Minister for Human Services Marise Payne, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Services Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, State Member for Penrith Styart Ayres, Federal Member for Parramatta Julie Owens and CEO of Settlement Services International Violet Roumeliotis.

Details: tickets \$60.00 (\$45.00 concession); from 5:30pm; Liverpool Catholic Club, 424-458 Hoxton Park Road, Prestons; for further information, email africaniteinfo@gmail.com.

2014 Community Relations Commission Symposium

Wednesday 20 August, Parramatta NSW

An annual event of the Community Relations Commission of NSW, the theme for this year's symposium is Harmony in Action: A new direction/Overseas conflicts and their impact on multicultural NSW. The Minister for Citizenship and Communities, the Hon. Victor Dominello MP, will address the audience and former Foreign Correspondent Political Editor and current Network Ten News Presenter Hugh Riminton will be the keynote speaker.

Details: Novotel Hotel, 350 Church Street, Parramatta; register online at http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/community_engagement/symposia/2014_symposium.

CEH workshop: Organisational health literacy

Wednesday 20 August, Richmond VIC

Health literacy is a state and federal health policy priority, and aims to improve individuals' capacity to understand and apply health information. This workshop provides methods to embed organisation-wide health literacy strategies into systems, operations, planning and workforce development. Hosted by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH).

Details: \$150.00; 9:15am-1:00pm; 23 Lennox Street, Richmond; for more information and to register, visit <http://ceh.org.au/training/workshops>.

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

Thursday 21 August, Carramar NSW

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

Details: \$149.00 (students \$99.00); 9:30am-4:30pm; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; for further information and to register, visit <http://www.startts.org.au/training>.

STARTTS workshop: Clinical approaches in the treatment of refugee trauma in children and adolescents

Thursday 21 and Friday 22 August, Carramar NSW

This two-day workshop aims to orient clinicians to how they can transfer their skills and experience to working with refugee trauma in children and adolescents. The first day covers the introductory concepts and will help clinicians better understand the complexity of issues faced by young refugees and asylum seekers, as well as STARTTS' service provision model. The second day will present an integrated psychological, social and neurological approach to developmental trauma and treatment.

Details: \$249.00 (\$149.00 students); 9:30am-4:30pm; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; for further information and to register, visit <http://www.startts.org.au/training>.

Perception is reality: How do we form our perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers?

Tuesday 26 August, Ashfield NSW

Hosted by Settlement Services International (SSI), this forum will examine the factors which influence public opinion and personal perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers. Speakers will include Professor Andrew Markus, who heads the Scanlon Foundation's social cohesion research program; print journalist Christine Rau; and Superintendent Mark Wright of the NSW Police Force.

Details: 6:00pm-7:30pm; SSI Auditorium, Level 2, 158 Liverpool Road, Ashfield; RSVP via <http://ssispeakersseriesaugust.eventbrite.com.au>.

VTMH Workshop: An introduction to cultural responsiveness for mental health services

Thursday 28 August, Fitzroy VIC

Presented by Victorian Transcultural Mental Health (VTMH), this workshop will introduce mental health professionals, working in both clinical and community managed mental health services, to cultural responsiveness.

Details: \$200.00 (\$50.00 for staff employed in Victoria's specialist mental health services, free for Consumer and Carer Consultants and Peer Support Workers); 9:30am-4:00pm; St Vincent's Hospital Education Centre, Level 3, Healy Wing, Fitzroy; for further information and to register, visit http://www.vtmh.org.au/literature_165964/OneDayTrainingFlyer2014.

'A Musical Solree' raising awareness and funds to support refugees and asylum seekers

Friday 29 August, Toowong QLD

Hosted by Toowong Uniting Church, this event will feature local and interstate guest artists including Conn O'Neill (Irish singer/songwriter from Hobart), Ali Rae Jones (international opera singer from Melbourne) and David Yevi Kabakoff (local artist of Russian heritage). All proceeds from ticket sales and profits from sponsorship donation funding will go to a special fund allocation to be used to provide support to refugees and asylum seekers in the local community. Tickets must be booked in advance as there will be no door ticket sales at the event.

Details: tickets \$25.00 (\$15.00 concession, \$60.00 for a family of two adults and two children under 18); 6:00pm-9:00pm; Toowong Uniting Church, 82 Sherwood Road, Toowong; for further information and to book tickets, contact Eliana Jones via 0407 486 755 or eventelivations@gmail.com.

Screening of 'To Light a Candle'

Saturday 31 August, Melbourne VIC

'To Light a Candle' focuses on the Baha'is in Iran, the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority. Following the 1979 Islamic revolution, Baha'is face systematic persecution including arrests, imprisonment and executions. They are also forbidden from attending or teaching at universities. Through interviews, personal stories and exclusive archival material - often smuggled out of Iran at great personal risk - the film shines a light on the underground Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE). The one-hour film will be followed by a panel discussion with the Hon Kelvin Thomson MP (Federal Member for Wills), Ms Azita Sobhani (family member of imprisoned BIHE teacher) and Dr Vargha Taefi (former BIHE student).

Details: tickets \$15.00; 2:00pm; Village Roadshow Theatre, State Library of Victoria, cnr Swanston and La Trobe Streets, Melbourne; book online at <http://tolightacandle.eventbrite.com.au>.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Beyond Detention: UNHCR calls for end for alternatives to immigration detention

UNHCR has issued a new global strategy aimed at helping countries move away from the detention of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless people worldwide. UNHCR has identified a number of countries to work with initially to revisit detention practices and to strengthen alternatives to detention, including Hungary, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Thailand, UK and Zambia. UNHCR plans to expand this group of countries over the coming five years. Access the report at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536b564d4.html>

Refugee Rights Toolkit

Asylum Access has revamped its Toolkit which is currently being used by refugee rights leaders in India and Indonesia. The Toolkit is aimed at developing leadership capacity and sharing best-practice advice on legal services, strategic litigation and political advocacy. Access the Toolkit at <http://refugeerightstoolkit.org/>

Woman Alone: UNHCR report on Syrian refugee women

A new UNHCR report documents the daily struggle of Syrian refugee women to make ends meet in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. The report is based on the personal testimony of 135 women, given over three months of interviews in early 2014 where they discuss insecurity, verbal harassment and hopes for their children. Read the report at <http://womanalone.unhcr.org/mobile/>

Roads to Refuge resource

This resource is designed to give students, teachers and the community access to relevant, factual and current information about refugees including definitions, refugee journeys, settlement and resources. Find out more at <http://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au/>

FECCA Access and Equity Report

The 2013-14 report provides a summary of the perspectives and broader feedback received through FECCA's consultations with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and service providers around Australia, on the design and delivery of Australian Government services. For further information, visit 02 6282 5755 and admin@fecca.org.au. To download the report visit <http://goo.gl/j2JLJf>

Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has updated and reviewed recent literature on the obstacles to employment for young refugees and examples of good practice. Read the report at http://gallery.mailchimp.com/7195f465e2ddfb560ce39cd77/files/Transitions_to_Employment_Report.pdf

Rethinking myths about the economic impacts of refugee communities

The University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre's "Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions" report uses new research on the economic life of refugees in Uganda to inform new thinking to turn humanitarian challenges into sustainable opportunities. Countering popular myths, the report shows refugee populations contribute in positive ways to the national economy in Uganda, are economically diverse, use and create technology and are far from uniformly dependent on international assistance. Access the report at <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/refugeeeconomies>

Stories of refugee and migrant women in Australia

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) has collected stories of Australian women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Prepared in inter-generational pairs, the stories provide an insight into the experiences of different immigrant women, including refugees, since their arrival in Australia, discussing their life experiences and journeys to Australia. The stories also recount personal struggles and challenges faced by migrant woman, as well as lessons learned, resilience and success stories. Find out more at <http://fecca.org.au/resources/womens-stories-project>

Asylum seekers living on bridging visas tell their stories

Moreland City Council in Melbourne has produced a short video on the lives of asylum seekers and refugees and how council works with community organisations to provide practical support and hope for humanitarian arrivals. The video also highlights the policy of denying work rights to asylum seekers, their long waits for answers on their refugee status and the despair and hopelessness these policies are creating in the local community. View the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VqKgML2piw&list=PLQbf6iHvxGPYnqFypPE_sSelmvi_5hqX&index=18

CMY video on the role of sport in settlement

The Centre for Multicultural Youth has produced a video detailing the experiences of young people of refugee background who found their involvement in sport had played a positive role in their lives. Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMvAr7B-fng>

Poverty among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK

This study focuses on the experiences of poverty among refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers, including women, children, unaccompanied asylum seeking minors, families, elderly, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) people, disabled, and members of cultural and religious minorities. The study includes strategies to prevent and reduce poverty. Access the report at <http://goo.gl/xAqbYU>

Study on refugee status determination evidence and mental health

This study seeks to understand the role of mental health evidence in the UK's refugee status determination (RSD) process. The study is based on 14 interviews with individuals involved in the production of mental health evidence. Access the study at <http://goo.gl/pFvTKW>

Information about your rights at work

The Fair Work Ombudsman offers free tools and resources to employees and employers to ensure Australian workplace laws are understood and followed. Their tools and resources can be found at www.fairwork.gov.au and included a language assistance page in 27 languages. Employers and employees can also call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

National directory for foreign language education options

Languages Australia has developed an on-line community directory of foreign language education options for children aged zero to 18 years. The directory provides links to more than 250 bilingual playgroups, over 145 preschool-age options, government and primary school language programs and after-school language and Saturday language schools. Find out more at <http://languagesaustralia.com.au/>

OPPORTUNITIES

Settlement opportunities in Armidale, NSW

Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement Inc is looking for needy overseas refugees and asylum seekers who wish our organisation to propose to the Australian Government their settlement in Armidale on Special Humanitarian Visa 202. Sanctuary proposes and brings approved people to Armidale, provides initial settlement support and ongoing friendship to the fullest extent required. Sanctuary has a fully-equipped a home ready for humanitarian arrivals. People who know of overseas people in need who would like to be proposed and supported by Sanctuary should contact Jeff Siegel, PO Box U243, Armidale NSW, Australia, 2351, email jsiegel@une.edu.au or telephone Jeff on 0434 146 856 or Robin Jones on 02 6771 1835 or 02 6773 2829.

Free App for Employment Support

Youth StepUP focuses on providing a cultural bridge, equipping refugee and migrant youth with the tools they need to navigate the labour market. Users can build a resume, tailor letters of application and access short videos on how to interview. The App is available from iTunes / Apps Store for Apple devices and Play Store/ Google play for Android devices. For those who do not have smart phones they can go directly to the webpage and login at <http://www.youthstepupbankstown.com.au/>

Friends of Zainab scholarship opens nationally

Applications are open for The Public Education Foundation's Friends of Zainab scholarship program, which supports students from a refugee or asylum seeker background, studying in public high schools and universities. The scholarships are each valued at \$1000 to \$2000 per year for a total of two years. The closing date for applications is Friday, 3 October. For a full list of scholarships on offer visit <http://www.publiceducationfoundation.org.au/scholarships/>. For further information contact info@publiceducationfoundation.org.au or call 02 9266 8681.

No Bubs Behind Bars campaign

The No Bubs Behind Bars campaign aims to give people a simple way to voice their opposition to the continued immigration detention of pregnant women, babies and children. Find out more at <https://www.facebook.com/nobubsbehindbars>

Walk from Villawood to Canberra for the silent many

Asylum seeker supporter Anne Hilton is embarking on "the walk for the silent many" from Villawood in Sydney to Canberra to change the cruel and inhumane system of Australia's immigration detention policies. The walk starts on Saturday 23 August outside the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre and ends outside Parliament House, Canberra on Monday, 1 September. Anne is inviting people to walk with her for part or all of the journey and donate to the walk which is supported by social movement Changing the Tide. Find out more at changingtt@gmail.com and at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1475275539385647/>

African Leadership Development Program applications open in Victoria

The African Leadership Development Program provides an opportunity for emerging African leaders to develop leadership skills and is inviting applications for the 2014 round. The program is held over 10 Saturdays between August and November in Melbourne. Applications close on 30 July. To apply, contact Leadership Victoria on 03 9651 6590 and at info@leadershipvictoria.org or visit <http://www.emailmeform.com/builder/form/M59E9cf0ft0IKo44w3yic>

Refugees welcome at Sydney's samba percussion group

Sydney's Bateria 61 Samba Percussion Group is extending a welcome to refugees to join its practice sessions. Bateria 61 is open to new players of any age and experience level and its members include people from different backgrounds and nationalities. Anyone interested in participating is encouraged to visit a free practice sessions at the Troy Horse Studios in Alexandria, near Redfern rail station. Details about the venue and practice times are available at <http://www.bateria61.com/>

Course to help understand statelessness

This interactive e-learning course from UNHCR raises awareness of statelessness, its causes and consequences and explains the relevant legal framework. The course should take around four hours to complete with six detailed modules covering key aspects of statelessness issues. Originally created for use amongst UNHCR employees, this course is now available publicly through Training Post at <https://trainingpost.com/course/statelessness>

Photojournalist explores what home means to refugee women

A photojournalist is interested in working with refugee women in Australia to examine the question of what the idea of "Home" means to them, given their experience of forced dispossession from their homelands. To find out more contact Lisa Hogben on 0456 727 324 and at lisa@lisahogben.com or visit <http://www.lisahogben.com/>

Editors sought for Refugee Rights Toolkit content

The Refugee Rights Toolkit project is seeking expert editors with experience in refugee rights and or NGO programming to review and edit various sections of the resource. For more details contact laura.parker@asylumaccess.org and specify your area of expertise and interests.

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

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

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

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

Sending asylum seekers to Sri Lanka 'risks flagrant violation of convention'

Australia would "flagrantly" violate the refugee convention if 153 Tamil asylum seekers on board a boat headed to Australia were sent to Sri Lanka without being allowed to lodge a claim for protection, the Refugee Council of Australia has warned. (The Guardian, 1 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/01/sending-asylum-seekers-to-sri-lanka-risks-flagrant-violation-of-convention>

Detainee who lost eye in Manus Island violence sues government and G4S

An asylum-seeker who suffered horrific injuries during the unrest inside the Manus detention centre in February is taking legal action against the Australian government and the security firm G4S for alleged failures in their duty of care. (The Guardian, 1 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/01/asylum-seeker-badly-injured-on-manus-island-sues-government-and-g4s>

PNG police hunt Salvation Army worker over Reza Berati's death in Manus Island riot

Papua New Guinea police are searching for a former Salvation Army worker who they believe killed asylum seeker Reza Berati on Manus Island. (ABC News, 1 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-01/png-police-hunt-salvation-army-worker-over-reza-beratis-death/5563508>

Government's health provider to be probed over treatment of children in detention

The federal government's medical health provider will face the Australian Human Rights Commission inquiry into children in detention on Wednesday. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 July)

<http://goo.gl/CT58G2>

Tamil asylum seekers handed over to Sri Lankan navy, according to reports

The Australian government is refusing to comment on reports circulating on Christmas Island that 153 Tamil asylum seekers have been handed over to the Sri Lankan navy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 July)

<http://goo.gl/VXOzMY>

Sri Lankan military denies plans to pick up asylum seekers from Australian authorities

The Sri Lankan military says it has not intercepted a boatload of Tamil asylum seekers bound for Australia and it has no plans to do so. (ABC News, 2 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-02/sri-lankan-military-denies-boat-intercepted/5565076>

Bishop urged to take up cause of Rohingyas

Rights groups are calling on Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to take a tough stance in talks with Myanmar's government amid a deteriorating humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of ethnic Muslim Rohingyas in refugee camps in Rakhine state. (SBS News, 2 July)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/02/bishop-urged-take-cause-rohingyas>

On-water asylum screening plan 'shelved amid fears it could be unlawful'

The immigration department considered using Australian customs vessels as “motherships” to interview and process asylum seekers as early as 2012 but was advised the process could be unlawful, according to a former department officer. (The Guardian, 2 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/02/on-water-asylum-screening-plan-shelved-amid-fears-it-could-be-unlawful>

Asylum-seeker children: self-harm ‘shockingly high’, national inquiry hears

Children account for the “greatest percentage” of self-harm incidents and suicidal behaviour by asylum seekers in detention, the president of Australia’s Human Rights Commission has revealed, citing new statistics showing there were 128 reported self-harm incidents amongst children in detention between January 2013 and March this year. (The Guardian, 2 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/02/asylum-seeker-children-prime-victims-of-self-harm-national-inquiry-hears>

Asylum seekers’ mental health linked to length of detention

The Department of Immigration and the government’s medical provider for asylum seekers have acknowledged that asylum seekers’ mental health declines the longer they are kept in detention. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 July) <http://goo.gl/bxFsWM>

Detention centre workers to be forced to give evidence at children in detention inquiry

The Australian Human Rights Commission has said it will force immigration detention centre workers to give evidence to its inquiry into children in detention. (ABC News, 2 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-02/detention-centre-workers-to-be-forced-to-give-evidence-inquiry/5565970>

Boats screened at sea

Australian officials are secretly screening out asylum seekers who are still at sea via video link as two boatloads of would-be refugees are being transferred at sea into Sri Lankan custody. (The Age, 3 July)

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/boats-screened-at-sea-20140702-3b8vz.html>

Concerns asylum seekers in Australia detention pressured to return home voluntarily

The head of Human Rights Watch in Australia is concerned about the increasing pressure being put on asylum seekers to voluntarily return home. (Australian Network News, 3 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-02/an-concerns-asylum-seekers-pressures-to-voluntarily-return-home/5567188>

Government move on visas may trigger High Court challenge

A bold move by the Abbott government to circumvent a decision of the High Court and the will of the Senate appears certain to trigger another High Court challenge. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 3 July)

<http://goo.gl/pv2lhb>

Six-week-old baby removed from Inverbrackie by Department of Immigration

A tiny Australian-born baby was among 14 asylum seekers herded onto a plane from Adelaide to Christmas Island on Thursday. (The Advertiser, 3 July) <http://goo.gl/ThSb2J>

UN: ‘profound concern’ at Australia’s handling of Tamil asylum seekers

The UNHCR has expressed “profound concern” that two boats carrying Tamil asylum seekers may have been sent back to Sri Lanka by the Australian government, and directly raised the possibility that Australia has broken international law. (The Guardian, 3 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/03/un-profound-concern-at-australias-handling-of-tamil-asylum-seekers>

Tony Abbott won’t reveal fate of asylum boats but says Sri Lanka is ‘at peace’

Tony Abbott refused to answer questions about the fate of two boatloads of asylum seekers on Thursday but said: “I want to make this observation, Sri Lanka is not everyone’s idea of an ideal society, but it is at peace.” (The Guardian, 3 July) <http://goo.gl/A76X1k>

Bishop rejects UN criticism of asylum seeker policy

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has defended the Abbott government’s asylum seeker policy after the United Nations said it was “profoundly concerned” by reports on the treatment of Tamil asylum seekers. (SBS News, 4 July) <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/04/bishop-rejects-un-criticism-asylum-seeker-policy>

Scott Morrison putting himself ‘above high court’ on asylum, says Labor

Labor has accused the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, of placing himself above the parliament and the high court as he pursues a new method of denying refugees permanent protection. (The Guardian, 4 July) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/04/scott-morrison-putting-himself-above-high-court-on-asylum-says-labor>

Take asylum seekers to PNG: Marles

Asylum seekers should be taken to Manus Island and not processed over the phone, opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles says. (The Australian, 4 July) <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/take-asylum-seekers-to-png-marles/story-fn3dxiwe-1226977774119>

Tamil asylum seekers have known of deportation policy for a year

Australian government officials launched a campaign in June last year warning would-be asylum seekers living in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu that they would be sent back to their Sri Lankan homeland if they tried to enter Australia without a valid visa. (The Age, 4 July) <http://goo.gl/IWSGTQ>

'We don't disappear' asylum seekers: Eric Abetz defends government

Employment Minister Eric Abetz has been forced to defend the Abbott government against allegations it 'disappears people' during questioning over Australia's forcible return of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka. (The Age, 6 July) <http://goo.gl/t1eyOf>

Payouts only after asylum seekers return home

Asylum seekers who are offered substantial amounts of money by the government to leave the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru must spend their own cash before receiving the payment. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July) <http://goo.gl/oFpMOH>

Scott Morrison urged to visit war-torn north during trip to Sri Lanka

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has been challenged to ditch his Sri Lankan political minders and visit the country's war-torn north to hear first hand about ongoing human rights abuses. (The Guardian, 6 July) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/06/scott-morrison-to-head-to-sri-lanka-amid-row-over-fate-of-asylum-boat>

Asylum-seekers returned to Sri Lanka, Scott Morrison says

Scott Morrison has defended his decision to hand 41 asylum-seekers back to Sri Lankan authorities during a transfer at sea, but won't reveal the fates of other refugee boats identified in recent weeks. (The Australian, 7 July) <http://goo.gl/wZujYk>

Tamils to be returned after Australia accuses Sri Lanka of torture

Australia is preparing to return more than 200 Tamil asylum seekers to Sri Lanka, despite alleging the country is responsible for government-sponsored torture, abuse and mistreatment by police and security forces. (The Age, 7 July) <http://goo.gl/bOHwxD>

Asylum seekers will be handed to police on return, Sri Lanka confirms

Labor, the Greens, Clive Palmer and a group of 53 legal experts have called on the federal government to reveal how asylum seekers are being assessed on board customs vessels, as the Sri Lankan government confirmed that 41 asylum seekers being returned via an unprecedented on-water transfer to the Sri Lankan navy will be handed to the police when they arrive back. (The Guardian, 7 July) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/07/asylum-seekers-will-be-handed-to-police-on-return-sri-lanka-confirms>

Australia accused of breaking law after returning asylum seekers to Sri Lanka

Australia has been accused of breaking international law and violating the refugee convention after returning a group of 41 asylum seekers who attempted to reach the country by boat directly into the hands of the Sri Lankan navy. (The Guardian, 8 July) <http://goo.gl/QcDv9s>

Tony Abbott accuses opponents of disruption as UN voices concern over boats policy

Tony Abbott has accused political opponents of trying to "disrupt" the government's boat turn-back policy, as the High Court prepares to hear a challenge to the return of a boatload of asylum-seekers to Sri Lanka. (The Australian, 8 July) <http://goo.gl/OlyMP6>

UN urges Australia review of refugee handling

Australia should hold a wide-ranging judicial review of its treatment of asylum-seekers from Sri Lanka, the United Nations' human rights office said amid uproar over Canberra's handling of the issue. (SBS News, 8 July)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/08/un-urges-australia-review-refugee-handling>

Global media turns focus on return of Sri Lankan asylum seekers

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's return of 41 Sri Lankan asylum seekers to their country of origin has attracted a flood of attention from media outlets across the world, highlighting criticism of the controversial policy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 July)

<http://goo.gl/VBU479>

PM says govt will not give in to 'moral blackmail' over asylum seeker suicide attempts

Prime Minister Tony Abbott says his government will not give in to "moral blackmail" following reported suicide attempts by asylum seekers on Christmas Island. (The Canberra Times, 9 July)

<http://goo.gl/sqad8a>

Asylum seekers in limbo on high seas

More than 150 asylum seekers, including about 40 children, face living in limbo on the high seas in an Australian customs vessel for weeks, while their fate is decided in the High Court. (The Canberra Times, 9 July) <http://goo.gl/CrONxs>

Asylum seeker mistreatment claims are 'urban mythology', Bob Carr says

Former foreign affairs minister Bob Carr has dismissed concerns about returning asylum seekers to Sri Lanka, and said allegations of mistreatment were "urban mythology". (The Guardian, 9 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/asylum-seeker-claims-mythology-bob-carr>

Returned Sri Lanka migrants vent fury

Sri Lankan migrants aboard a boat that was controversially turned back mid-sea by Australia have slammed Canberra, claiming they were abused, given little food and water and treated 'worse than dogs'. (Sky News, 9 July)

<http://www.skynews.com.au/news/world/asiapacific/2014/07/09/returned-sri-lanka-migrants-vent-fury.html>

Eric Abetz confirms 'minor' self-harm by asylum seekers on Christmas Island

The Federal Government has confirmed what it describes as a series of "minor self-harm incidents" at the immigration detention centre on Christmas Island. (ABC News, 9 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-09/senator-abetz-says-self-harm-by-asylum-seekers-is-minor/5585222>

Self-harm by asylum seekers has surged since offshore processing – leaked report

The immigration department was warned that self-harm among asylum seekers in detention – particularly on Christmas Island – has surged since the introduction of mandatory offshore resettlement and would continue to do so, Guardian Australia can reveal. (The Guardian, 9 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/self-harm-asylum-seekers-detention-surged-serco-report>

Julian Burnside accuses government of piracy over Sri Lankan asylum seekers

Leading human rights lawyer and advocate Julian Burnside QC has told the ABC that the Australian Government's holding of 153 asylum seekers on a customs boat at sea may amount to piracy. (The Guardian, 10 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/10/julian-burnside-accuses-government-piracy-sri-lankan-asylum-seekers>

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison maintains secrecy over asylum seekers

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has defended the secrecy surrounding the fate of 153 south Asian asylum seekers being held at sea by Australian authorities as an integral part of the federal government's operations strategy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 July) <http://goo.gl/XWOL2D>

'Piracy on the high seas': Malcolm Fraser

Former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser has characterised Australia's interdiction and detention of more than 150 Sri Lankan asylum-seekers at sea as "piracy on the high seas". (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 July)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/piracy-on-the-high-seas-malcolm-fraser-20140709-zt1eq.html>

Father of 3yo asylum seeker fears family will be 'wiped out' if returned to Sri Lanka

The father of a three-year-old asylum seeker being held on a Customs vessel at sea fears his family would be "wiped out" if returned to Sri Lanka. (ABC News, 10 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-09/father-fears-for-family-if-returned-to-sri-lanka/5585948>

Asylum seekers' plea: Let Australians adopt our children

Pregnant asylum seeker women on Christmas Island pleaded with medical experts to adopt their children out to Australian families four months ago, as they became anxious about their future. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 July) <http://goo.gl/SwyL4x>

Immigration Minister makes secret visit to Sri Lanka's war-torn Jaffna region

Australia's Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has reportedly made a secret visit to the war-torn Sri Lankan region of Jaffna during his whirlwind stop in the South Asian nation. (ABC News, 10 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-10/morrison-visits-sri-lanka27s-war-torn-jaffna-region/5586266>

Detainee in self-harm bid sent back to Christmas Island against medical advice

A 24-year-old detainee understood to have jumped from a height on Christmas Island had recently been transferred back to the island against medical advice, Guardian Australia can reveal. (The Guardian 10 July) <http://goo.gl/Jqn4Ps>

Immigration Minister slams asylum seeker alarmists over suicide attempt claims

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has hit out at incorrect claims that a dozen women tried to kill themselves in the Christmas Island detention centre, saying he would not be distracted by partisan commentary. (The Herald Sun, 10 July) <http://goo.gl/DJGB0r>

Cash payments increased to help asylum seekers return home

The Abbott government has admitted it hiked the size of payments to asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru to remove any "barrier" for them to return home. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 July)

<http://goo.gl/g5UqHW>

Asylum seekers' first thought: Thank-you letter

The 41 asylum seekers aboard the Sithumina fishing vessel who were picked up by Australian navy and returned to Sri Lanka on Monday were so grateful at first for their treatment that all of them signed a handwritten letter of thanks. (The Canberra Times, 11 July)

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/world/asylum-seekers-first-thought-thankyou-letter-20140711-zt4ji.html>

Fate of detained asylum seekers unclear as Government deflects questions from UN

Both the United Nations and a Senate inquiry have failed in efforts to cast any light on the fate of 153 asylum seekers detained at sea by Australian authorities. (ABC News, 12 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-11/sovereign-borders-chief-tight-lipped-on-asylum-boat-fate/5590826>

People smugglers planning more boat trips to Australia, says analyst

People smugglers are organising for more asylum seekers to come to Australia by boat from Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia, a regional terrorism expert has cautioned. (The Canberra Times, 13 July)

<http://goo.gl/8QM0F5>

PNG yet to interview suspects in asylum seeker murder, five months on

Papua New Guinea police are yet to interview any suspects over the murder of Reza Berati in the offshore processing centre on Manus Island, more than five months after his death. (The Age, 16 July)

<http://goo.gl/f1dVSX>

Australia may have breached key element of refugee convention: UNHCR

The United Nations refugee agency has expressed alarm that Australia may have breached a cornerstone of the refugee convention by returning a group of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka after intercepting their boat at sea. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 July)

<http://goo.gl/zLvn8g>

Tamil asylum seekers being held at sea in windowless locked rooms

More than 150 Tamil asylum seekers on board an Australian border protection vessel are being detained in windowless locked rooms with men kept apart from their families against their will, newly released high court documents have revealed. (The Guardian, 16 July) <http://goo.gl/OOP7pP>

Sri Lankan asylum-seekers to remain stuck on Australian ship

More than 150 Sri Lankan asylum-seekers are likely to languish on the high seas aboard an Australian vessel until the High Court can decide their fate, with judges unable to hear the case until early next month. (The Australian, 18 July) <http://goo.gl/T20QgS>

Abbott government silent on details of Tamils' interception and detention

The government wants details of its decision-making around the interception and detention of 153 Tamil asylum seekers kept secret, the high court heard on Friday. (The Guardian, 18 July) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/18/abbott-government-silent-on-details-of-tamils-interception-and-detention>

Government in fight over refugee injury claims

The Abbott government is potentially facing tens of millions of dollars in compensation payouts in dozens of lawsuits filed by injured asylum seekers, sparking a bitter feud between the Commonwealth and private detention camp operators over who should foot the bill. (The Sunday Age, 20 July) <http://www.smh.com.au/national/government-in-fight-over-refugee-injury-claims-20140718-zu0se.html>

Manus violence eyewitnesses claim Australians forced them to recant

Two asylum seekers in detention on Manus Island say they were forced to retract their eyewitness accounts of violence in February after being beaten and threatened by Australian officials at the centre. (The Age, 22 July) <http://goo.gl/zqu65u>

Scott Morrison backflips and grants visa to boy who arrived by boat

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has granted a permanent visa to a refugee who arrived by boat, despite fighting the boy's case in the High Court and signalling he would not be swayed when the court found against him. (The Age, 22 July) <http://goo.gl/1xRXn8>

Australia says its obligations to asylum seekers do not apply outside its waters

The Australian Government has argued its international obligations of non-refoulement – returning asylum seekers to countries they have fled in fear of persecution – do not apply to interceptions outside Australian territorial waters. (The Guardian, 22 July) <http://goo.gl/UL8hne>

Separate rooms, limited sun for asylum seekers

Family members among 157 asylum seekers being detained on the high seas in separate rooms on a customs vessel are allowed out for meals and “approximately three hours” of daylight a day, according to a document lodged with the High Court on Tuesday. (The Canberra Times, 23 July) <http://goo.gl/1aMwV8>

India seeks access to 157 Tamil asylum seekers being held at sea by Australia

India has sought consular access to the 157 Tamils on board an Australian border protection vessel, following a visit to New Delhi by Australia's immigration minister where he formally requested that India take back the group of asylum seekers. (The Guardian, 23 July) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/23/india-seeks-access-tamil-asylum-seekers>

Bring our boys home: the shocking case of teen asylum seekers removed from homes

Two 16-year-old asylum seekers living in Adelaide were taken from their carer without warning or explanation and have been moved to a detention centre in Darwin, causing outrage in the boys' community and school. (The Daily Mail, 23 July) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2702326/Vietnamese-teenagers-taken-homes-deported-Darwin.html>

Christmas Island asylum seekers attempt poisoning

Harrowing eyewitness accounts from the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission and a team of medical experts say there is a mental health crisis on Christmas Island, confirming multiple suicide attempts and self-harm incidents. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 July) <http://goo.gl/Uhxhol>

Delhi offers little comfort to Morrison's boat mission

The Indian government appears likely to only accept the return of Indian nationals among the 157 Tamil asylum seekers who have been held on the high seas by Australian customs officials for 26 days. (The Canberra Times, 24 July)

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/world/delhi-offers-little-comfort-to-morrison-boat-mission-20140723-zw2wr.html>

Tamil asylum seekers will come to Australia, immigration minister admits

The Australian immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has conceded that 157 Tamil asylum seekers on board a Customs vessel will be brought to Australia, following exclusive revelations from Guardian Australia on Friday that the government plans to land them on the Cocos Islands. (The Guardian, 25 July)

<http://goo.gl/G3b6oi>

Asylum seekers given generic birthday dates as Government redetermines their age

Asylum seekers are being given the same generic birthday dates as the Federal Government redetermines their ages, it has been claimed. (The Sunday Mail, 27 July) <http://goo.gl/oZHCjY>

Sarah Hanson-Young plans to visit Curtin detention centre

The Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young says she will visit Curtin detention centre in Western Australia to ensure asylum seekers transferred from the boat intercepted in the Indian Ocean are aware of their rights. (The Guardian, 27 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/27/sarah-hanson-young-plans-to-visit-curtin-detention-centre>

Refugees feel welcome, despite struggles

The vast majority of refugees who have arrived in Australia since 2012 say they feel welcomed in their new country, despite dealing with mental health and trauma problems. (The Australian, 28 July)

<http://goo.gl/7SVqVK>

Scott Morrison says any claim of asylum from India would be absurd

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has ridiculed as “absurd and offensive” suggestions that 157 asylum-seekers who sailed from India could be genuine refugees, insisting they must be “economic” migrants. (The Australian, 28 July) <http://goo.gl/R7Ssq6>

False imprisonment claims heard in High Court over Tamils held on boat for a month

A High Court challenge to the Abbott government’s powers over asylum seekers it takes into custody on the high seas has been widened to include a claim for damages for false imprisonment. (The Age, 28 July)

<http://goo.gl/xdwqGU>

Government pays \$330,000 for a room it doesn’t use

Taxpayers have forked out close to \$330,000 including \$800 for a door knob, for a border protection media briefing room that hasn’t been used since its completion 10 months ago. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 July) <http://goo.gl/RlqADE>

Green Sarah Hanson-Young slammed for slur on India

Australia’s Indian business community has slammed Sarah Hanson-Young, saying it is “completely inappropriate” for the Greens senator to trash India’s reputation and compare it to terrorists because for decades it has offered refugees a haven. (The Australian, 29 July) <http://goo.gl/9VG1uw>

Indian officials prepare to meet with Tamil asylum seekers ‘within days’

Indian officials will meet the 157 asylum seekers sent to Curtin detention centre “within days”, as lawyers working for the Tamils were granted their first access on Tuesday. (The Guardian, 29 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/29/indian-officials-prepare-to-meet-with-tamil-asylum-seekers-within-days>

Human Rights Commission compels workers caring for asylum children in detention

Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs is using her powers to compel witnesses to appear at a hearing into children in immigration detention. (ABC News, 29 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-29/human-rights-commission-compels-witnesses/5632448>

SA asylum seekers living in fear: bishop

Young asylum seekers living in community detention are scared they will be sent back to detention centres, an Adelaide bishop says. (The Australian, 29 July) <http://goo.gl/LhDFTX>

Signed cricket bat places Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee in asylum row

Glenn McGrath has defended himself after being drawn into the Australian government's handling of Tamil asylum seekers. (The Guardian, 29 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/29/signed-cricket-bat-places-glenn-mcgrath-and-brett-lee-in-asylum-row>

Sarah Hanson-Young 'helps the people-smugglers'

Tony Abbott says all Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young's actions help facilitate the people-smuggling trade and she is undermining the government's efforts to stop the boats. (The Australian, 30 July)

<http://goo.gl/e9uzlQ>

Morrison accused of 'state sanctioned child abuse'

A group of Catholic and Anglican church leaders have accused the Abbott government of "state-sanctioned child abuse" in the immigration detention system, and called for Immigration Minister Scott Morrison to step down from his position as guardian for all unaccompanied minors. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 July) <http://goo.gl/98dVnf>

Will Royal Commission look at children in detention?

The treatment of children in immigration detention could be investigated by the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse. (SBS News, 30 July)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/07/30/will-royal-commission-look-children-detention>

Nauru asylum seekers begin peaceful protests as discontent grows

Asylum seekers detained in the family and single women camp on Nauru have begun peaceful protests, Guardian Australia has been told by eyewitness sources. (The Guardian, 30 July)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/30/nauru-asylum-seekers-begin-peaceful-protests-as-discontent-grows>

Detained children's mental health problems covered up, inquiry told

The immigration department has attempted to cover up statistics showing alarming rates of children's mental health problems in detention, the Australian Human Rights Commission's inquiry into children in detention has heard. (The Guardian, 31 July) <http://goo.gl/MC5kti>

Talk to Indians or end up in a third country, Morrison to asylum-seekers

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has warned a group of asylum-seeker they face being resettled in a third-party country if they refuse to speak to Indian consular officials. (The Australian, 31 July)

<http://goo.gl/a0Gup2>

Sarah Hanson-Young denied access to Curtin Detention Centre to visit asylum seekers

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young says she has been denied access to the Curtin Detention Centre to visit the 157 Tamil asylum seekers who were held on an Australian Customs ship for almost a month. (ABC News, 31 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-30/sarah-hanson-young-denied-access-to-curtin-detention-centre/5635690>

Asylum seekers showing signs of trauma, torture, says senator

About four of five of the 157 asylum seekers being held at a remote detention centre in Western Australia after being detained in windowless rooms on the high seas for almost a month are showing signs of trauma and torture, Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has claimed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 31 July) <http://goo.gl/ezyOLu>

Australia tried to get India to take Tamil asylum seekers while still on Customs ship

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has revealed Australia unsuccessfully tried to get India to take 157 asylum seeker while they were being held on a Customs ship for almost a month. (ABC News, 31 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-30/australia-failed-india-asylum-seekers-customs-boat-morrison/5636708>

Human Rights Commission president labels asylum seeker inquiry evidence 'damning'

Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs has described evidence of a government cover-up about the scale of mental health issues among child asylum seekers as "very troubling and damning". (Radio National, 31 July) <http://goo.gl/dAsguG>

Stop boats to stop child detention: PM

The only way to avoid having children in detention is to stop asylum seeker boats trying to reach Australia, Prime Minister Tony Abbott says. (The Courier-Mail, 31 July) <http://goo.gl/aNwFJ7>

Hanson-Young: my visits not to blame for detention centre unrest

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young denies her visits to detention centres have sparked unrest among detainees, insisting the government's policies are designed to be "as harmful as possible". (The Australian, 31 July) <http://goo.gl/PFiD7y>

'Young-looking' refugees sent offshore

Young-looking children were chosen to be transferred to the harsh Manus Island refugee detention centre to discourage other refugees from coming to Australia, an inquiry has heard. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 31 July) <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/younglooking-refugees-sent-offshore-20140731-3cx2n.html>

Two teenage asylum seekers flee immigration detention in Darwin

Two teenage asylum seekers have fled from detention in Darwin, the Immigration Department has confirmed. (ABC News, 31 July)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-31/two-escape-from-immigration-detention-in-darwin/5638846>

For an overview of media reports from June, visit <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/digest.php>