



# Refugee Council of Australia

## **BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS**

**13 October 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](mailto:admin@refugeecouncil.org.au).

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

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## **NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL**

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### **New asylum and maritime legislation strips away checks on Ministerial powers**

RCOA condemned the Federal Government's new Bill to amend asylum and maritime powers as a comprehensive assault on Australia's obligations to protect victims of persecution. RCOA produced a preliminary overview of the amendments and issued a statement critical of the Government's plans to strip away the already limited safeguards for people seeking asylum. The statement said that, while the legislation was presented to the public as a humane political compromise between the Government and the Palmer United Party to remove children from detention and provide a pathway to a permanent visa for refugees, there appeared to be no clear pathway to permanent protection. RCOA drew attention to amendments in the 118-page *Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014* that if passed by Parliament, would introduce changes to strip away fairness for people seeking refugee protection and prevent the courts from intervening to ensure that the Minister acted in accordance with the rule of law and in line with Australia's treaty obligations. Read the statement and overview at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140926\\_AsylumLegacyBill.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140926_AsylumLegacyBill.pdf)

### **RCOA launches consultations on Refugee and Humanitarian Program**

This week, RCOA starts its national consultations on the future of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. This year's consultations with service providers, refugee community members and interested members of the public will be held in a number of metropolitan and regional locations in Australia and focus on three key issues: Australia's response to international refugee needs; Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program; and implications of the program on other priorities. The consultations inform RCOA's annual submission to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection on issues the Australian Government should consider in planning the coming year's refugee program. As in previous years, this consultation and submission process is funded by the Government through a contract with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (the only regular Federal Government funding RCOA now receives). RCOA has produced a discussion paper to assist people participating in the consultations. The schedule of consultations is still being finalised but the current schedule and the discussion paper are available at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/isub.php>. If you cannot make it to an information and consultation meeting but would like to contribute your views, please contact us to arrange a phone interview or email your thoughts to [admin@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:admin@refugeecouncil.org.au).

### **Torture case prompts call for Australia to suspend returning asylum seekers**

RCOA President Phil Glendenning repeated his plea for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to suspend forcible returns of asylum seekers to Afghanistan following revelations in *The Saturday Paper* that an asylum seeker, Zainullah Naseri, who was returned in August was then abducted and tortured by the Taliban. The story by writer, researcher and RCOA board member Abdul Karim Hekmat, recounted Zainullah's abduction and torture and the fear and uncertainty he is now experiencing in Afghanistan. Mr Glendenning, who visited Afghanistan in mid August, had asked Departmental officials in late August not to proceed with the forced return of Zainullah, informing them of the serious deterioration in security conditions in the country he had witnessed during his visit just a week earlier. In a statement, Mr Glendenning said: "Our Government repeatedly claims that its motivation in stopping

#### **Sydney office:**

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia  
Phone: (02) 9211 9333 • Fax: (02) 9211 9288  
[admin@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:admin@refugeecouncil.org.au)

Web: [www.refugeecouncil.org.au](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au) • Twitter: @OzRefugeeCouncil

#### **Melbourne office:**

Level 2, 313-315 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia  
Phone: (03) 9600 3302

[melbourne@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:melbourne@refugeecouncil.org.au)

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asylum seekers travelling by boat to Australia is to save lives. It would be grossly hypocritical of the Government to continue forced returns of Afghan citizens knowing that their return could well mean a death sentence.” Read the statement at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141007\\_AfghanReturns.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141007_AfghanReturns.pdf)

### **Australia’s asylum policies singled out at Executive Committee of UNHCR**

NGOs working with displaced people around the world singled out Australia for strong criticism at the 2014 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Executive Committee meeting in Geneva. In a joint statement coordinated by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the world’s NGOs said they remained “deeply disturbed by the continuing deterioration of protection standards for asylum seekers in Australia”. The five-day meeting brought together government representatives from 94 nations to discuss international refugee needs and to set the agenda for UNHCR’s work for the following 12 months. The meeting focused on the need for nations to share responsibility for assisting more than 50 million people displaced by persecution and conflict, the highest number of displaced people and refugees since World War II. The NGO statement on protection raised concerns related to the Syrian crisis, issues in Kenya and the Horn of Africa and the movement of unaccompanied children from Central America but its clearest and strongest criticism was of actions taken by the Australian Government. Read the statement, which includes a link to the NGO statement, Australia’s statement and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ response at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141004\\_ExComAus.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141004_ExComAus.pdf). Delegates were also challenged to end the global neglect of Africa’s 15 million displaced people with the UN High Commissioner expressing his regret about “the double standard that marks the way the world views humanitarian crises today”, comparing the international media attention and political debate about crises in the Middle East and Ukraine with the limited discussion of international action in Africa. Read RCOA’s statement at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141002\\_Africa.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141002_Africa.pdf). RCOA was one of a number of organisations to provide advice to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection about issues Australia could consider raising at the meeting. These issues are outlined in RCOA’s statement at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140929\\_ExCom.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140929_ExCom.pdf)

### **Write To Be Heard campaign for fairer refugee and asylum policies**

RCOA has launched a new campaign under the A Just Australia banner encouraging people to write to local Members of Parliament and Senators to demand positive change in refugee and asylum seeker policy. “Write To Be Heard” was launched with an action targeting the Government’s introduction of Temporary Protection Visas and also asked members to advocate for Australia to suspend forcible returns of asylum seekers to Afghanistan. At least once a month, people will be invited to consider a current issue of concern to asylum seekers and refugees and to write to political representatives about it. Further details about Write To Be Heard can be found at [www.ajustaustralia.com](http://www.ajustaustralia.com)

### **Punishment not protection for refugees sent to Cambodia**

The agreement signed between Australia and Cambodia to resettle refugees from Nauru in Cambodia was described by RCOA as yet another example of Australia deflecting its international obligations on to a much poorer country which lacked the capacity to provide effective protection to refugees. In a statement, RCOA said Cambodia faced serious challenges in meeting the basic needs of its own population and could not be expected to provide the specialised support refugees needed to recover from trauma and settle successfully. RCOA also expressed fears about the safety of refugees given Cambodia history of deporting refugees and asylum seekers to situations where they were at risk of serious persecution, as well as its disregard for basic human rights standards. Read the statement at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140925%20Cambodia.pdf>. The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) also issued a statement critical of Australia and Cambodia for entering into the agreement and declared the South East Asian country already struggled to provide adequate services to existing refugees. Read the statement at <http://goo.gl/IMSQUZ>

### **Independent investigation needed into sexual assault allegations in detention**

RCOA called for an immediate, independent investigation into serious allegations of sexual assault in immigration detention centres on Nauru, Christmas Island and on mainland Australia. In a statement, RCOA said the Australian Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention revealed there was no legal framework or complaints mechanism for people with allegations of sexual abuse on Nauru. The statement described as “intolerable” a policy that allowed vulnerable asylum seekers to be sent into an environment where the contracted security firm was responsible for

investigating child abuse allegations made against its own staff. Read the statement at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141001\\_AbuseInquiry.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/141001_AbuseInquiry.pdf)

### **Australia Ignores UN call for action on statelessness**

As the world commemorated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1954 Statelessness Convention, RCOA drew attention to Australia's inaction on the issue. As part of its global campaign to eradicate statelessness over the next decade, UNHCR hosted the First Global Forum on Statelessness in The Hague with more than 300 stateless people, government representatives, academics, international organisations and NGOs discussing challenges and sharing good practices and policies. In a statement, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said that despite Australia being a signatory to both the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, the lack of a statutory statelessness determination procedure coupled with no viable resolution for stateless people meant that hundreds of stateless people in detention and in the community faced an uncertain future. Read the statement at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140916\\_Statelessness.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140916_Statelessness.pdf).

### **New Bright Ideas profiles Community Commerce**

The latest Bright Ideas brief examines the Community Commerce project which aims to unlock the potential of humanitarian arrivals by providing business assistance, networks and interest-free loans. Based in Sydney, Community Commerce is an initiative of Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family. Find out more about the initiative at [http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/brightideas/Bright\\_Ideas15\\_CommtyComrce.pdf](http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/brightideas/Bright_Ideas15_CommtyComrce.pdf). Access the Bright Ideas briefs at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/brightideas.php>. If you have an initiative you think could be profiled in Bright Ideas, contact [info@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.au) or (02) 9211 9333.

### **Refugee Welcome Zone initiative gathering momentum**

Parkes Shire Council in the Central West of New South Wales is the latest Refugee Welcome Zone initiative which now boasts 109 councils. Recent signatory Kiama Municipal Council held a special civic event at the Council which was attended by RCOA CEO Paul Power, local church leaders and human rights advocates. To find out more about the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative, visit: <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/g/rwz.php>

### **RCOA AGM forum to focus on protection at sea**

RCOA will hold its 2014 Annual General Meeting in Melbourne on Monday 24 November, with issues relating to the protection of asylum seekers at sea being the focus of the public forum to follow the AGM. The question of protection at sea is a major focus of international discussion this year, as UNHCR prepares for a High Commissioner's Dialogue on this topic in Geneva in December (see <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/5357caed6.html>). Details of RCOA's evening forum on protection at sea are still being finalised. It will be preceded by RCOA's 2014 AGM and a consultation for RCOA members and supporters to share their ideas about priorities for the organisation in 2015. Information about the AGM and forum will be available at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/a/agm.php> as they come to hand.

### **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](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Refugee-Council-of-Australia-RCOA/157472830949702). Our Twitter feed is @OzRefugeeCounc

## **COMING EVENTS**

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### **Sri Lanka and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation Thursday 16 October, St Lucia QLD**

Hosted by the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the R2P Student Coalition, this panel discussion will focus on the findings of the UN Inquiry Team, which was assigned by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate alleged war crimes committed at the end of the Sri Lanka civil war in 2009. This panel will discuss the background events that led to the Human Rights Council vote to conduct a war crimes inquiry into the Sri Lankan civil war, as well as the implications of its findings to the process of peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. Speakers will include Gordon Weiss, who was a spokesperson for the UN in Sri Lanka during the last months of the civil war in 2009; Emily Howie, Director

of Advocacy and Research at the Human Rights Law Centre; and Dr Sam Pari, National Spokesperson for the Australian Tamil Congress.

**Details:** 6:30pm-8:30pm; Auditorium, Level 2, Sir Llew Edwards Building (Bldg 14), University of Queensland St Lucia campus.

### **Asylum Seekers Centre Great Gatsby Fundraising Gala**

**Friday 17 October, Paddington NSW**

The Asylum Seekers Centre's annual fundraising evening will be hosted by H.G. Nelson and feature the Queen of Rice Paper Rolls, Nahji Chu, as keynote speaker. The event will also include trivia, live and silent auctions, a live band and a very special performance.

**Details:** tickets \$120.00; 6:00pm; Paddington Town Hall; book tickets online at <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/AsylumSeekersCentreofNSW/gala.html>.

### **Tesh-Defy: Boat People**

**Friday 17 October, Brunswick VIC**

Hosted by OPT, the Amnesty Refugee Network Victoria and I am a Boat Person, this event will bring together producers, DJs and musicians from around Australia to celebrate the contributions of people from refugee backgrounds. All profits will be donated to the Amnesty Refugee Network Victoria.

**Details:** tickets \$10.00 before midnight, \$15.00 after midnight; 10:00pm-6:00am; My Aeon, 791 Sydney Road, Brunswick; for further details, visit

[https://www.facebook.com/events/351393378345208/?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/events/351393378345208/?ref=br_tf).

### **STARTTS workshop: Clinical and community development approaches in early childhood with refugee families**

**Friday 17, Thursday 23 and Friday 24 October, Carramar NSW**

This new three-day workshop aims to orient early childhood clinicians and other workers to how they can transfer their skills and experience to working with refugee trauma in the 0-6 age group. The first day covers the introductory concepts, and will help clinicians better understand the complexity of issues faced by young refugees, asylum seekers and their families, as well as STARTTS' service provision model. The final two days will focus on trauma recovery and development in early childhood, and culturally appropriate interventions.

**Details:** \$349.00 (students \$219.00) for three days, \$249.00 (\$149.00 students) for two days; 9:30am-4:30pm; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; for further information and to register, visit <http://www.startts.org.au/training>.

### **Northern Beaches Tibetan Health Fund fundraiser**

**Saturday 18 October, Dee Why NSW**

This dinner event will raise funds for the Northern Beaches Tibetan Health Fund, which provides support to newly-arrived humanitarian entrants from Tibet.

**Details:** tickets \$45.00 (includes dinner and a donation, must be purchased in advance); 7:30pm; Red Onion Thai Restaurant, 629 Pittwater Road, Dee Why; to buy tickets or for further information, email [tibetanhealthfund@gmail.com](mailto:tibetanhealthfund@gmail.com).

### **2014 STARTTS Refugee Ball**

**Thursday 23 October, Sydney NSW**

The 2014 Refugee Ball will feature a three-course meal, drinks, a charity auction, speakers and entertainment. All funds raised will go towards STARTTS' programs to assist refugees to overcome their past experiences and build a new life in Australia.

**Details:** tickets \$150.00; 7:00pm-12:00am; Dockside, Balcony Level, Cockle Bay Wharf; RSVP by 16 October through <http://www.startts.org.au/news-events/refugee-ball>; for further details, email [refugeeball@startts.org.au](mailto:refugeeball@startts.org.au).

### **Fundraiser for Asylum Seeker Resource Centre: Love songs from 17th Century Italy**

**Friday 24 October, Carlton VIC**

This event will feature performances of 17th Century Italian love songs by classical music group Ensemble Sappho. All proceeds will be donated to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

**Details:** tickets \$20.00; 7:00pm; Medley Hall, 48 Drummond Street, Carlton; to book tickets, visit <http://www.trybooking.com/Booking/BookingEventSummary.aspx?eid=104069>; for further details, contact Hannah Lane 0409 545 987 [sapphoensemble@gmail.com](mailto:sapphoensemble@gmail.com);

### **RAILS fundraiser and launch of legal education CD**

**Friday 24 October, West End QLD**

This event will launch an innovative legal education music CD and songbook, as well as raising funds to support the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service, which has recently had its government funding cut.

**Details:** entry by donation; 6:00pm-8:00pm; Kurilpa Hall, 174 Boundary Street, West End; RSVP via [education@rails.org.au](mailto:education@rails.org.au).

### **Walk Together 2014**

**Saturday 25 October, Australia-wide**

The theme of this year's Walk Together event is "Common people, common dreams", aiming to remind Australians that no matter who you are, or how you arrived here, we share the same dreams of safety, peace, opportunity, belonging and a better future for our children.

**Details:** 1:00pm; for details of Walk Together events in your city, visit <http://walktogether.welcometoaustralia.org.au>.

### **Welcome to Logan celebration**

**Saturday 25 October, Logan QLD**

This celebration will officially welcome recently arrived humanitarian migrants to the City of Logan. It will commence with the Access Walk Together event to recognise and embrace the message 'if we're all people, we're all equal'. The walk leads to the Welcome to Logan event which will include information stalls, entertainment, guest speakers and much more.

**Details:** walk commences at 3:00pm from Wembley Service Road, Logan Central; Welcome to Logan event commences at 4:00pm at the Harmony on Carmody carpark, cnr Carmody Street and Ewing Road, Logan Central; for further information, contact Robyn Masters (07) 3412 5324 [communityservices@logan.qld.gov.au](mailto:communityservices@logan.qld.gov.au).

### **Flavours of Auburn 2014**

**Saturday 25 October, Auburn NSW**

Now in its sixth year, Flavours of Auburn showcases the cuisines of communities living in Auburn. Dishes are cooked by some of Sydney's emerging communities and provide an opportunity to taste and experience foods you cannot find easily in Sydney's restaurants. The event will also include cultural performances.

**Details:** free entry, food tickets \$10.00 for three sample dishes; 12:00pm-3:00pm; Auburn Centre for Community, 44A Macquarie Road, Auburn; for more information and to buy tickets, visit <http://flavoursofauburn.com.au>.

### **Law for community sector workers: Immigration law**

**Wednesday 29 October, Sydney NSW**

Hosted by Legal Aid NSW, this workshop will cover humanitarian visas, family stream migration, the review options available to clients and the issues around family breakdown and visa cancellation.

**Details:** 12:00pm-3:30pm; Training Centre, Level 12, 323 Castlereagh Street, Haymarket; register (essential) at [www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/register](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/register), email [cle@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cle@legalaid.nsw.gov.au) or call (02) 9219 5879.

### **2014 Think Smart Multicultural Media Conference**

**Wednesday 29 October, Parramatta NSW**

Hosted by the Hon Matthew Mason-Cox MP, Minister for Fair Trading, this event will include presentations and information about resources on tenancy and other consumer rights issues.

**Details:** 1:30pm for a 2:00pm start to 3:00pm; Community Migrant Resource Centre, Level 4, 1 Horwood Street, Parramatta; RSVP by 20 October to Aurelia Rahma [arahman@cmrc.com.au](mailto:arahman@cmrc.com.au) (02) 9687 9901; for more information, contact Neneth Costa [neneth.costa@finance.nsw.gov.au](mailto:neneth.costa@finance.nsw.gov.au) (02) 9619 8705.

### **Multicultural youth networking evening**

**Thursday 30 October, Bankstown NSW**

Panellists will include Benny Ngo, Tanveer Kaur and Sara Mansour. Entertainment will be provided by hip hop artist Adam Hazim Niza and finalists from Bankstown's Talent Battle 2014 Serena Sabine and Tanya Tago.

**Details:** 6:00pm-8:00pm; Bankstown Arts Centre, 5 Olympic Parade, Bankstown; RSVP to Cecilia Tsai on (02) 8255 6819 or [cecilia.tsai@crc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cecilia.tsai@crc.nsw.gov.au).

### **Kaldor Centre annual conference**

**Monday 3 November, Kensington NSW**

The annual conference of the Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law will focus on the theme for this year is "Between Principle and Pragmatism: Australia and Refugee Law, 60 Years On". The keynote speaker will be Professor Guy S Goodwin-Gill, Professor of International Refugee Law and Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College, University of Oxford.

**Details:** 9:00am-5:00pm; Law Building Theatre G04, University of NSW Kensington campus; for further information and to register, go to <http://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/node/372#overlay-context=>.

### **City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture: Julian Burnside**

**Wednesday 5 November, Sydney**

The City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture is an annual address given by the new year's recipient of Sydney Peace Prize. This year's recipient is Julian Burnside AO QC.

**Details:** Sydney Town Hall; buy tickets online at <https://sydney.onestopsecure.com/OneStopWeb/asp/transform.aspx?TRAN-TYPE=1018>.

### **Celebration of African Australians awards presentation**

**Friday 7 November, Melbourne VIC**

The Celebration of African Australians aims to celebrate, appreciate and showcase the contributions of people from African backgrounds to Australia's growth and prosperity. This awards presentation will recognise African Australians who have made significant contributions in their field as well organisations, businesses and individuals that provide support to the African community and political leaders who have actively promoted African-Australian engagements.

**Details:** 6:00pm-11:00pm; Queen's Hall, Parliament of Victoria; for further information, visit <http://www.celebrateafricanaustralians.org>.

### **Challenges to sovereignty: The Impact of migration law and policy**

**Friday 7 and Saturday 8 November, Canberra ACT**

Hosted by the Australian National University Migration Law Program, this interdisciplinary conference will explore the impact that migration law and policy has across the world and time. Keynote speakers will include Professor Satvinder Juss, Professor of Law, Kings College London; and Professor Zlatko Skrbis, Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Research Training, Monash University.

**Details:** Australian Centre on China in the World, Fellows Road, Australian National University, Acton, Canberra; for further information, visit <https://law.anu.edu.au/conferences/challenges>.

## **NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Medical research: mandatory detention a form of child abuse**

A Medical Journal of Australia article reports that Australian paediatricians oppose offshore processing and consider mandatory detention a form of child abuse. The article also finds that there is a clear need for education about practical issues such as current health screening practices and Medicare eligibility. Read the report at

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2014/201/7/australias-treatment-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-children-views-australian>

### **Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool**

The Australian Human Rights Commission has developed a free online tool to help businesses enhance productivity through a culturally diverse workplace. The tool was developed in partnership with Diversity Council Australia and VicHealth and will help organisations to measure themselves against international best practice and identify areas for improvement. Further details are available at <http://culturaldiversity.humanrights.gov.au>

## OPPORTUNITIES

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### **Free courses for asylum seekers at University of Melbourne**

The University of Melbourne is inviting asylum seekers to attend a lecture series during October and November which will discuss issues in modern and historical Australia, including education, human rights, equality, health and Indigenous cultures. Time will be set aside for discussion of topics and to talk with lecturers, students and others. The course is not formal and will not lead to a recognised award and participation will not impact on immigration status. All lectures will be conducted in English and are free to attend. No registration is required. Food and drink will be provided. For further details visit <http://www.socialequity.unimelb.edu.au/lecture-series-for-asylum-seekers/>

### **Welcome Dinner Project connects refugees, asylum seekers with local communities**

The Welcome Dinner Project is enabling newly-arrived people, including refugees and asylum seekers to connect with established Australians to meet over dinner conversation in the comfort of their own home. The project aims to create a platform for meaningful connection, sparking friendships between people of diverse cultures who are living in close proximity to one another but have not had an opportunity to connect. Further details are available at

<http://www.joiningthedots.org/initiatives/dsp-initiative.cfm?loadref=103&id=101>

### **Sydney's Culinary Tales provides refugees and asylum seekers with work experience**

Culinary Tales allows refugees and asylum seekers to teach cooking classes to other members of the community. The aim of the project is to provide refugees and asylum seekers with local work experience, as well as celebrating the diverse cultures of Australia. The program invites more people to be involved with the project. To be eligible, participants must be refugees or asylum seekers with the right to work in Australia. Contact [culinarytales@sydneyenactus.org](mailto:culinarytales@sydneyenactus.org) and 0403 958 499. Further details are available at [www.culinary-tales.com](http://www.culinary-tales.com)

### **Multifaith Multicultural Youth Network (MMYN) members sought in Victoria**

The MMYN is comprised of 25 young people aged between 16 and 25 who have an interest in multicultural and multifaith issues. The Network advises the Victorian Government on issues affecting youth from diverse cultural, religious and linguistic communities in Victoria. MMYN members will work on projects, travel to various parts of Victoria, learn how government operates and engage with the community. Specialised training will also be offered in cultural and religious sensitivity and media. Applications for 2015 close on Friday 17 October at 5.00pm. Contact Wendy Chew on 03 9651 0640 and at [omac@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:omac@dpc.vic.gov.au). Further details available at

<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/promoting-harmony/consultative-structures>

### **Research on perceptions of child protection challenges facing refugee women and children in NSW**

Professionals in the field of child protection and refugee support are invited to participate in a study of service provider's perceptions of the main child protection challenges facing refugee women with children following resettlement in NSW. This is a small preliminary study to explore relevant issues and review current research. The study may also form the basis of further research within a PhD. Later research would involve extensive interviews with members of the refugee community. The study seeks to identify the factors that professionals consider to be the main challenges for refugee women with children following resettlement and crucial considerations for child safety and protective services in NSW. Contact Vanessa Maginnis on 0414 888 847 or [z3367725@zmail.unsw.edu.au](mailto:z3367725@zmail.unsw.edu.au) to request the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

### **Unionists for Refugees established in Perth**

A group of unionists in Perth are building a network to campaign for a humanitarian and welcoming refugee policy. Interested union members or supporters are invited to meet on the second Tuesday of every month at Level 6 of the CSA Building, 445 Hay Street, Perth from 5.30pm. Contact [unionists4refugees@gmail.com](mailto:unionists4refugees@gmail.com). Further details at <https://www.facebook.com/unionistsforrefugeeswa>

### **"Banana Boy" to focus on the humanity of young refugees**

Emerging film-makers Steven Woodburn and Sam Smith are raising funds to make "Banana Boy" – a 15-minute short film based on the story of a six-year-old Afghan refugee struggling with the death of his

mother and the challenges of a new life in Australia. The project has been developed in consultation with Mahboba's Promise with 10 per cent of the funds raised donated to help the organisation's work in supporting refugees. Find out more at <http://www.pozible.com/project/184578> and [www.bananaboy-shortfilm.com](http://www.bananaboy-shortfilm.com)

*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**

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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)

### **Scott Morrison confident of swaying Senate to temporary protection visas**

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison is optimistic of securing Senate crossbench backing to restore temporary protection visas and remove all children from onshore immigration detention, accusing Labor and the Greens of being blinkered by politics. (The Australian, 1 September) <http://goo.gl/jnnVOK>

### **Syrian asylum seeker sent back under government's voluntary program**

The Abbott government has sent one asylum seeker back to Syria and several others back to Iraq through voluntary return packages last month. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 September) <http://goo.gl/6rrmM>

### **Frustration grows among asylum seekers as PNG yet to offer resettlement**

More than three months after Tony Abbott said asylum seekers would begin to be resettled in Papua New Guinea, the PNG Government is still to decide on a resettlement policy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 September) <http://goo.gl/qZmBfT>

### **Asylum seeker changes force Red Cross job cuts**

The Red Cross will shed 500 staff after the immigration department cut its asylum-seeker case load. (The Australian, 2 September) <http://goo.gl/20IvpZ>

### **Scott Morrison to wind down Manus Island detention centre in favour of Nauru**

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has ordered that no asylum seekers be sent to Manus Island, instead funnelling them to the small Pacific Island of Nauru. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 September) <http://goo.gl/WsbVT5>

### **Tensions remain high in Manus Island asylum seeker detention centre: report**

Increased tensions at the Manus Island detention centre arising from self-harm, the use of isolation rooms and factions among the detainee population have been revealed in a batch of intelligence reports seen by Guardian Australia. (The Guardian, 2 September)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/02/tensions-high-manus-island-asylum-seeker-detention-centre-report>

### **Asylum seeker 'brain dead after delay' in treatment for infection**

An asylum seeker who contracted a skin disease on Manus Island, has been announced brain dead by doctors in Brisbane's Mater Hospital. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 3 September) <http://goo.gl/I95NY6>

### **Asylum seeker's family mourn 'sensitive, lovable' son declared brain dead**

The mother of the 24-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei, declared "brain dead" after being evacuated from the Manus Island detention centre has spoken of her anguish at the plight of her "sensitive, harmless, lovable" son and her inability to be at his side. (The Guardian, 4 September)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/04/asylum-seekers-family-mourn-son-declared-brain-dead>

### **IHMS and Serco likely to retain onshore detention centre contracts**

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) and Serco Australia look set to keep their lucrative immigration detention centre contracts after the immigration minister, Scott Morrison, announced both companies as preferred bidders in a new round of onshore detention tenders. (The Guardian, 4 September)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/04/ihms-and-serco-likely-to-retain-onshore-detention-centre-contracts>

### **Asylum seeker in data breach case wins leave to appeal injunction rejection**

A federal court judge has granted an asylum seeker who had their personal details exposed online leave to appeal to the federal court. (The Guardian, 4 September)

<http://goo.gl/vimbtt>

### **Concern over data breach at Nauru immigration centre**

Fears for the safety of asylum seekers at the Nauru Immigration Detention Centre have been raised amid claims that the personal details of hundreds of detainees have been stolen. (SBS News, 4 September)

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/09/04/concern-over-data-breach-nauru-immigration-centre>

### **Former defence force chief Chris Barrie slams asylum-seeker policy**

The defence force chief responsible for border protection under the Howard government has slammed the federal government's asylum seeker policy. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 September)

<http://goo.gl/1u3Hcr>

### **Asylum seeker on life support was given 'outstanding' care, says Scott Morrison**

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, has said that asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei received "outstanding" medical treatment on Manus Island, following his family's confirmation to Guardian Australia that the 24-year-old has been declared brain dead. (The Guardian, 5 September)

<http://goo.gl/UuT8xL>

### **Lawyer for family of Iranian asylum seeker says possibility of Government negligence**

The family of deceased Iranian asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei have enlisted the help of a lawyer to investigate whether they have a case of negligence against the Australian Government. (ABC News, 5 September)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-06/lawyers-for-asylum-seeker-who-died-claim-government-negligent/5724670>

### **New UN human rights chief attacks Australia over asylum seeker rights 'violations'**

Australia has been accused of a "chain of human rights violations" in its treatment of asylum seekers by the incoming United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September) <http://goo.gl/eMNHkh>

### **Lawyer for asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei confident of inquest into his death**

The lawyer representing the asylum seeker who died after cutting his foot at the Manus Island detention centre is confident his death will be ruled as a "death in custody", triggering an inquest. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September) <http://goo.gl/rVuH1Y>

### **Asylum seekers say dozens hurt in attack, Morrison says claims 'grossly inaccurate'**

Vietnamese asylum seekers at the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre say members of the group were bashed and injured during a targeted attack on Friday night. (ABC News, 8 September)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-08/christmas-island-detainees-allege-attacks/5726136>

### **No plans yet to raise refugee intake: PM**

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is leaving the door ajar to increasing Australia's intake of refugees. (The West Australian, 8 September)

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/national/a/24925837/no-plans-yet-to-raise-refugee-intake-pm/>

### **Chris Bowen denies adviser asked for 'youngest looking' to be sent to Manus**

Former Labor immigration minister Chris Bowen has denied his office instructed a senior departmental official to transfer the youngest looking children to Manus in order to deter asylum seekers from trying to reach Australia. (The Guardian, 9 September) <http://goo.gl/4rBp9q>

### **Villawood asylum seekers in solitary for more than 24 hours at a time**

Hundreds of asylum seekers at Villawood detention centre have been placed in solitary confinement for days at a time at the direction of staff without medical qualifications. (The Guardian, 10 September)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/10/villawood-asylum-seekers-in-solitary-for-more-than-24-hours-at-a-time>

### **Morrison proposes releasing asylum seekers onto Australian mainland under TPV plan**

Asylum seekers who arrived by boat last year could be offered temporary protection visas and allowed to live in the Australian mainland community, in a major policy backflip by the Abbott government. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 10 September) <http://goo.gl/7Bbms5>

### **PNG refugee resettlement program faces 'difficult and frustrating problems'**

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says there are still major problems with the refugee resettlement arrangements in Papua New Guinea. (Radio National, 10 September) <http://goo.gl/fmue48>

### **Nauru detention centres running out of water, emails reveal**

Detention centres on Nauru are experiencing serious water shortages and reserve supplies may run out, emails seen by Guardian Australia show. (The Guardian, 10 September) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/10/nauru-detention-centres-running-out-of-water-emails-reveal>

### **Immigration detention doctors 'should consider boycott', says MJA article**

Doctors working in the immigration detention network should consider a boycott of the system until the standard of care is improved, an article published by the Australian Medical Association in the respected Medical Journal of Australia has argued. (The Guardian, 11 September) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/11/immigration-detention-doctors-should-consider-boycott-says-mja-article>

### **Ruling on TPVs could affect thousands of asylum seekers not being processed**

A High Court ruling could have implications for thousands of asylum seekers who are not having their claims for asylum processed. (ABC News, 12 September) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-12/protection-visa-ruling-could-affect-asylum-seekers-claims/5738496>

### **Refugees won't stay clustered: official**

A senior immigration official has said refugees resettled in Cambodia from Australia's offshore detention centre on Nauru will not be housed together and will be encouraged to seek work. (Phnom Penh Post, 12 September) <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/refugees-won%E2%80%99t-stay-clustered-official>

### **Morrison says High Court loss won't affect mandatory detention of refugees**

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has rejected claims that his latest High Court defeat could have implications for thousands of asylum seekers in immigration detention. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 September) <http://goo.gl/DLmK3H>

### **Sri Lanka's asylum seeker expulsion plans to be challenged in Supreme Court**

Sri Lankan rights activists have gone to the country's highest court in a bid to stop the government deporting Afghan, Iranian and Pakistani asylum seekers. (ABC News, 13 September) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-13/sri-lankas-asylum-seeker-expulsion-plans-challenged/5741950>

### **Claims asylum seeker virtually unrecognisable when medically evacuated**

When Iranian asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei was medically evacuated to Brisbane from Port Moresby, he was unconscious, his body almost unrecognisable due to his swollen state, it has been alleged. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 September) <http://goo.gl/JpwhJp>

### **Asylum seekers: PNG minister seeks to hasten resettlement from Manus Island**

Papua New Guinea's foreign minister is trying to unblock his cabinet's deliberations about the resettlement of refugees from the Australian-funded processing centre on Manus Island by separating it from broader decisions about asylum policy. (The Guardian, 15 September) <http://goo.gl/jSEF32>

### **Raise refugee intake to cope with refugees from Syria and Iraq, Bill Shorten says**

Australia's refugee intake should be boosted as part of the Abbott government's humanitarian efforts in the Middle East, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has said, as he outlined parameters governing Labor's support for military action in Iraq. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 September) <http://goo.gl/GP5UTp>

### **Revealed: The secret mission that stopped the asylum boats from entering Australia**

The federal government has confirmed Navy and Customs vessels have secretly turned back at least 12 asylum-seeker boats at sea this year and stopped a further 45 bound for Australia from leaving port. (The Daily Telegraph, 18 September) <http://goo.gl/RSUxr0>

### **Harvard, Charles Darwin aims to help asylum seekers get legal representation**

Migration lawyers in the Northern Territory say at least 1,000 asylum seekers in Darwin detention cannot get enough legal help, but a new program may change all that. (ABC News, 19 September) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-19/program-to-help-asylum-seekers-get-legal-representation/5755632>

### **Critically ill asylum seeker held on Manus for week: witness accounts**

Asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei was kept on Manus Island for a week waiting for approval to be medically transferred to Port Moresby despite showing signs of septicaemia that killed him, it has been alleged, as leaked documents reveal a pattern of medical negligence on the island including untreated skin infections, tooth decay and tropical diseases. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 September) <http://goo.gl/FgT2pP>

### **MP compares refugee risk to horse betting**

A Liberal MP has been chastised for comparing the plight of asylum seekers hoping to be allowed into Australia to betting on the horses. (Sky News, 22 September) <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/national/2014/09/22/mp-compares-refugee-risk-to-horse-betting.html>

### **Aust plan broke refugee convention: UNHCR**

Australia would have breached the refugee convention if it had returned more than 150 asylum seekers to India after they were intercepted at sea, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees says. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September) <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/aust-plan-broke-refugee-convention-unhcr-20140923-3gg11.html>

### **Manus security firm, G4S, responsible for February violence, says law centre**

Australia's former security contractor at the Manus Island detention centre was directly responsible for violence that broke out in February and in which Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati was killed, a former complaint lodged by the Human Rights Law Centre on Tuesday claims. (The Guardian, 23 September) <http://goo.gl/eiACL8>

### **Gay asylum seekers on Manus Island write of fear of persecution in PNG**

Gay asylum seekers detained by Australia on Manus Island have written of suicidal thoughts, experiences of sexual assault and fear of persecution in Papua New Guinea in a series of handwritten letters seen by Guardian Australia. (The Guardian, 24 September) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/24/gay-asylum-seekers-manus-island-fear-persecution-png>

### **Charities call Cambodia refugee resettlement deal immoral**

Australia's refugee resettlement deal with Cambodia will be an uncapped an "ongoing" relationship, Scott Morrison said, as a former Family Court chief justice lashed the proposal as "inappropriate, immoral and likely illegal". (The Australian, 25 September) <http://goo.gl/5HYOY6>

### **Morrison strikes deal with Clive Palmer to reintroduce temporary protection visas**

Some asylum seekers could eventually be given permanent residency in a deal reached between Clive Palmer and Immigration Minister Scott Morrison to allow the reintroduction of temporary protection visas and remove all asylum seekers from Christmas Island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 September) <http://goo.gl/JjvZDk>

### **Scott Morrison seeks legal changes to block asylum seeker appeals**

The immigration minister, Scott Morrison, is pushing for major amendments to Australia's asylum seeker laws that will head off a series of recent court decisions and coming legal challenges. (The Guardian, 25 September) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/25/scott-morrison-seeks-new-law-to-block-asylum-seeker-legal-challenges>

### **Cambodians protest Aust asylum-seeker plan**

About 100 people, including Buddhist monks, have demonstrated outside Australia's embassy in Cambodia against a deal to have asylum seekers who were turned away by Australia resettle in the impoverished Southeast Asian country. (The Australian, 26 September) <http://goo.gl/EEPDrK>

### **Cash-strapped Nauru government says asylum seeker services on the brink: report**

Nauru's government will soon be unable to transport health, legal and other services to about 1200 asylum seekers detained on the island, according to reports of an affidavit in the NSW Supreme Court. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 September) <http://goo.gl/VbeaQe>

### **Cambodian deal not a people swap: Morrison**

Asylum-seekers in Nauru who are found to be refugees and voluntarily opt to go to Cambodia will be permanently resettled and have family reunion rights. (The Australian, 27 September) <http://goo.gl/8jN5n2>

### **Sexual abuse, rape threats alleged by Nauru asylum seekers**

Asylum seekers have made allegations of sexual abuse of women and children and threats of rape by guards working in the detention centre on Nauru. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 September) <http://goo.gl/Rhx0c8>

### **Failed asylum seekers claim torture after being turned back**

Some failed asylum seekers, who've been sent back to Sri Lanka by Australia, say they've been abducted, tortured and abused by the Sri Lankan security forces on their return. (SBS World News, 30 September) <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/09/29/failed-asylum-seekers-claim-torture-after-being-turned-back>

### **Detention centre child sex abuse claims number in dozens**

Immigration department figures obtained by Fairfax Media show that there were 33 cases of alleged sexual assault involving children in Australian detention centres and Christmas Island between January 2013 and March 2014. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 September) <http://goo.gl/C5INQG>