



# A Just Australia

12 March 2012

## **Asylum seekers are “genuine” too**

The Federal Coalition has signalled its intention to allocate more resettlement places for people it has labelled “genuine refugees”.

We welcome any commitment to increase resettlement places, particularly when numbers are in global decline, but we can't ignore our obligations to asylum seekers.

The suggestion that people seeking asylum in other countries are “genuine” refugees but those seeking asylum in Australia are not is nonsense.

Many people who seek asylum in Australia are found to be in need of international protection because they have experienced serious persecution.

People seeking asylum in Australia need our protection and support, not divisive and ugly campaigns to question their legitimacy or humanity.

Last month, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Herald-Sun* led one of these ugly campaigns, tearing away at community processing of asylum seekers.

Regrettably, some Coalition members went along with the story even though they were actually criticising a policy started by the Howard government in 2005.

RCOA has written to Opposition Leader Tony Abbott to remind the Coalition of Australia's obligations to asylum seekers under the Refugee Convention.

But we need your support to remind Coalition Members that asylum seekers are as genuine as refugees and that both need our protection and support.

## **How you can help**

### ***Contact your Coalition MP and tell them:***

- The commitment to more resettlement places for refugees is welcome but only one part of a fair and balanced refugee and asylum seeker policy
- Australia, as a Refugee Convention signatory, has an obligation to protect asylum seekers who arrive in Australia

### ***Remind them that community processing of asylum seekers:***

- was a policy started by the Howard government in 2005
- is a cheaper and more humane alternative to mandatory detention
- is a proven model in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA
- will work given the enormous capacity that exists in our communities

***Tell them indefinite mandatory detention:***

- is expensive, working out at an average of \$137,310 per detainee
- irreparably damages the mental health of asylum seekers, most of whom become recognised refugees
- undermines Australia's efforts to encourage South-East Asian countries to provide legal and human rights protection for refugees and asylum seekers

***Ask them:***

- How can Australia expect countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to provide better protections for refugees and asylum seekers when its own policy is to contract out its responsibilities through offshore processing and towing back boats?

**How to contact your local MP**

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/index.htm>

<http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/senators/index.htm>

<http://www.ajustaustralia.com/action/mps.php>

**Essential reading**

The Coalition's announcement about refugee resettlement places

<http://www.tonyabbott.com.au/News/tabid/94/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/8622/Migration-and-Women-at-Risk.aspx>

RCOA letter to Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/statements/120308\\_TAbbott\\_Woman@Risk.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/statements/120308_TAbbott_Woman@Risk.pdf)

False claims made by *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Herald-Sun* about community processing

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/welcome-asylum-seekers-chris-bowen-and-julia-gillards-ship-of-fortune/story-e6freuzr-1226273201568>

RCOA's response to the reporting

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/120217%20-%20Daily\\_Telegraph.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/120217%20-%20Daily_Telegraph.pdf)

**Further reading**

The International Detention Coalition has studied the benefits of community-based processing in other countries.

<http://idcoalition.org/cap/>

**Feedback is encouraged**

Please share any responses you receive through your advocacy work. Send any feedback to [media@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:media@refugeecouncil.org.au)