

We stand in solidarity with asylum seekers and refugees

- We believe that everyone has the right to a life that is free from persecution and life-threatening situations
- We seek to live in a society that is shaped by compassion and justice for all people including those seeking asylum in Australia
- We affirm the right of asylum seekers to live a dignified, meaningful and safe existence while their claims for protection are being processed
- We believe Australia can and should be more generous and provide resettlement and permanent protection to many more refugees and people seeking asylum

Organised by the Refugee Advocacy Network,
a coalition of community and faith based groups,
unions and refugee advocacy organisations.
Call Chris 0403 013 183 or Marie 0409 252 673 for more info
or visit refugeeadvocacynetwork.org



WALK for

JUSTICE for REFUGEES

PALM SUNDAY MARCH

2pm, April 13, State Library

corner Swanston & La Trobe Sts Melbourne

<https://www.facebook.com/events/576807879077076>



Justice for refugees and people seeking asylum would mean:

Welcoming Refugees: “Stopping the Boats” is designed to stop people from claiming asylum in Australia. People have a legal right to travel to Australia – by any means – to seek asylum. If we want to protect people from drowning, we need to provide other ways of people getting to Australia to seek asylum. Indonesia is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, so asylum seekers and refugees are essentially ‘stateless’ in Indonesia, with no hope of ever getting citizenship and a secure future. Australia should not be pushing responsibility for these people back onto Indonesia. We know people have died when their boats have been turned back¹. Australia is spending millions of dollars ‘protecting our borders’ from vulnerable people in wooden boats – and denying them their right to seek asylum in Australia.

Not sending asylum seekers offshore: Claims for refugee status should be properly assessed in Australia. Australia should accept and support people found to be refugees. Asylum seekers are being sent to detention camps in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru. Amnesty International described the situation on Manus Island (PNG) as “tantamount to torture”, with detainees being denied sufficient water, medical help, privacy, and living in cramped conditions and unbearable heat². Conditions on Nauru, where pregnant women and young children have been sent are similarly inhumane. These offshore detention centres will cost \$2.867 billion for 2013/14³. These detention camps should be closed. Processing asylum seekers in the Australian community, with the right to work, while their claims are assessed, would be more humane and cheaper.

Closing Australia’s Detention Centres: Over 8000 refugees are currently detained in facilities in Australia, Nauru, Manus Island and Christmas Island, including 1028 children⁴. Detention leads to despair and often serious mental health issues. Mandatory detention is cruel, unnecessary and violates the right to freedom for people who have done no wrong. In addition 46 refugees with adverse ASIO assessments have been detained for more than 4 years and face indefinite detention; they have never been charged or tried and have no formal right of review. No other country has long term mandatory detention, and it is illegal to detain people without charge.

Fair and speedy processing of Asylum Claims & Family Reunion: Approximately 30,000 asylum seekers are currently living in the community on Bridging Visas. Many have been waiting for years, with no right to work and only assistance equivalent to 89% of the lowest Centrelink payment or less. A fair and thorough process should not take years. A recent policy change effectively removes the possibility of family reunion for anyone who came by boat since 2001 including those recognised as refugees. No permanent protection visas are currently being issued, leaving thousands of asylum seekers in limbo. Processing refugee claims and issuing permanent, not temporary visas should re-commence immediately.

No Deportations to Danger: Australia has effectively deported Tamil people back to danger in Sri Lanka through “enhanced screening processes” that do not properly assess their claims. Now the government has started to try and forcibly deport asylum seekers back to Afghanistan as well. We know that people forcibly deported to danger from Australia have been tortured and killed in the past⁵.

Increasing the refugee quota: Australia accepts nearly 200,000 migrants each year, but only 13,750 refugees. We can afford to be more generous and accept more people fleeing persecution and life threatening situations in our region. Australia currently ranks only 49th in the world for refugee intake per capita⁶, or 91st when our national wealth is taken into account⁷.

Sources

1. <http://theconversation.com/towing-back-the-boats-bad-policy-whatever-way-you-look-at-it-15082>
2. This is Breaking People: Human Rights Violations on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (Amnesty International, 2013)
3. Budget 2013/14 http://www.budget.gov.au/2013-14/content/bp1/html/bp1_bst6-01.htm
4. Immigration Dept Statistics, Dec 31, 2013 <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics>
5. Edmund Rice Centre “Deported to Danger Reports” available at <http://www.erc.org.au>
6. UNHCR GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT 2012
7. <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2011/01/05/glance-who-takes-most-asylum-claims>

Australia’s current policies are violating human rights and are breach of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention