

The TRUTH about asylum seekers

- from The Asylum Seekers Resource Centre. www.asrc.org.au

Asylum seekers and refugees do not get large handouts from the government

- **Most asylum seekers in the community are not allowed to work.** Any person who takes longer than 45 days to seek asylum will be given a visa that denies them the right to work, Medicare or an income. Also, anyone who seeks the humanitarian intervention of the Minister for Immigration to ask to stay in Australia must give up their work rights and access to Medicare to do so.
- **The reality is the majority of asylum seekers are forced into a life of poverty and reliance** on organizations such as the ASRC just to survive as a result of deliberate policies of destitution by our Federal Government.
- **Asylum seekers want to work and support themselves but are not allowed to.** If caught working to support their family, they will be placed into a detention centre. Asylum seekers who have no work right are not even allowed to do volunteer work.
- **Asylum seekers do not come to the Australia to claim benefits.** In fact, most know very little about how even to seek asylum in Australia or whether they have any entitlements to government support.
- **Asylum seekers do not jump the queue for public housing as they are not eligible for public housing.** Asylum seekers are forced to rely on the goodwill of local communities, charities and churches for housing.
- **Asylum seekers do not get any special benefits or perks.** All asylum seekers are denied access to: Centrelink, a Health Care Card, Job Network, Settlement Programs, AMES English Classes and all Federally Funded Programs.
- **Most asylum seekers are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger.**

Asylum seekers and refugees are law-abiding citizens

- Contrary to government and media depictions of asylum seekers, **the vast majority of people seeking asylum are law - abiding citizens.**
- **Asylum seekers are no more likely to commit crimes than anyone else.**
- **Asylum seekers often feel unable to report incidents of racial/sexual harassment or violence.**
- **Many female asylum seekers do not go out at night due to fear of abuse and harassment.**
- **Department of Immigration officers have the power to detain asylum seekers, even if they have not committed any crime.**

Refugees make a huge contribution to Australia

- **Refugees have brought expertise, innovation and skills,** which have made a significant economic and social contribution to the development of this country and its resources. They are among our most high achieving communities.
- For instance, five of the top ten names on Business Review Weekly's 'Rich 200' list in Australia are people whose families originally came to this country as refugees'. [1]
- Refugees from places such as Afghanistan and Iraq have been critical in taking on jobs in rural areas for countless business who would not have survived if not for their willingness to take on these jobs.

Asylum seekers are looking for a place of safety

- **There is no such thing as illegal asylum seeker.** Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in Australia and to remain here until the authorities have assessed their claim.
- **Asylum seekers are not economic migrants.** The top ten refugee producing countries in 2006 all have poor human rights records or are places where war or conflict is ongoing.
- **The 1951 Refugee Convention guarantees everybody the right to apply for asylum.** It has saved millions of lives. No country has ever withdrawn from it.
- **Most asylum seekers do not choose their destination country.**
- **Many refugees and asylum seekers hope to return home at some point** in the future, provided the situation in their country has improved.

Australia's asylum system is very tough

- **The Australia asylum system is one of the harshest and toughest in the Western World. It's very difficult to get asylum.**
- **We are one of only a handful of countries in the world that has a policy of mandatory detention,** Temporary Protection Visas for boat arrivals and offshore detention centres.
- The decision – making of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship remains poor, over 20% of their decisions in 2006 were overturned on review by the Refugee Review Tribunal.

Poor countries - not Australia - look after most of the world's refugees

- Three quarters of the world's refugees are living in developing countries, often in camps. Australia takes only 13,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants a year in total, meaning we rank 32nd in the world in the number of refugees taken by countries.
- In 2007 – 2008 the government has stated that the 13,000 place cap will remain, the sixth year in a row at the same number whilst all other visa categories continue to expand. We are one of only 9 countries in the world to cap the number of people we will take in our humanitarian program.
- Asian countries host 45 per cent of all refugees, followed by Africa (30 per cent), Europe (19 per cent) and North America (5 per cent). Australia and New Zealand combined receive less than 1 per cent of the world's total applications for asylum. Worldwide, 336,000 asylum applications were lodged in 2006.
- During 2005-06, 81,862 humanitarian applications were lodged requesting Australia's protection. Only 14,144 were granted.

Reference Sources:

- Amnesty International
- UK Refugee Council