

2. WHAT IS REFUGEE WEEK?

Refugee Week has been celebrated in Australia since the 1980s. It provides a platform where positive images of refugees can be promoted in order to create a culture of welcome throughout the country.

Our ultimate aim is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia.

The aims of Refugee Week are:

- To educate the Australian public about who refugees are and why they have come to Australia
- To help people understand the many challenges refugees face coming to Australia
- To celebrate the contribution refugees make to our community
- To focus on how the community can provide a safe and welcoming environment for refugees
- For community groups and individuals to do something positive for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people, within Australia but also around the world
- For service providers to reflect on whether they are providing the best possible services to refugees.



The Western Bulldogs AFL Team celebrates Refugee Week, 2009.
www.westernbulldogs.com.au

Refugee Week is a unique opportunity for us all to experience and celebrate the rich diversity of refugee communities through theatre, music, dance, film & other educational or cultural events which take place all over Australia and highlight the aims of the Week, as outlined above.



Kosovo Roma children living in Roma Mahalla, Mitrovica, doing the UNHCR 'protection' symbol for World Refugee Day in 2008.
© UNHCR/S. Saran.

Refugee Week is an umbrella participatory festival that allows a wide range of refugee community organisations, voluntary and statutory organisations, schools, student groups and faith based organisations to host events during the week. Past events have included football tournaments, public talks and exhibitions as well as music and dance festivals, theatre projects, and film screenings.

Everyone is welcome to participate in promoting the aims of Refugee Week – the more the better! In 2010 the Refugee Council of Australia is encouraging organisations to celebrate a unified Refugee Week. The date coincides with the celebration of World

Refugee Day on June 20 offering greater opportunities for creating awareness of local, national and international issues affecting refugees.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING REFUGEE WEEK 2010!

When is Refugee Week?

Refugee Week 2010 will be held from **Sunday, June 20 (World Refugee Day) to Saturday, June 26**. Through Refugee Week we aim to provide an important opportunity for asylum seekers and refugees to be seen, listened to and valued.

2010 theme: Freedom From Fear

The theme for Refugee Week in 2010 is "Freedom From Fear."

This motif, which started in 2009 will continue through to 2011 in the lead up to the 60th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention. Our hope is that by retaining this theme for Refugee Week over three years, we will be able to focus greater attention on the realities of the refugee experience.

It is fear – fear of persecution, fear for their own lives – that makes refugees so different from every other migrant coming to Australia. Refugees are not people who have leisurely decided they'd prefer life somewhere else. They are fleeing their own country because it is no longer safe for them to stay. The key notion here is that they have no real choice. Their lives are in danger.

"Freedom from Fear" in the 1951 Refugee Convention:
Any person who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.

"Freedom from Fear" in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people."

When refugees flee, they are forced to abandon everything they know and love. They are separated from family members, lose belongings, are left with little or no money. Some are traumatised by what they have experienced. Many spend years in camps, lost in no-man's land whilst their fate is decided. Most have no idea what kind of future awaits them. In seeking refuge in another country refugees are hoping to find freedom from this fear of persecution. They are looking for the opportunity to lead a normal life, as part of a community, where they can live in safety and security, find work and send their children to school. And this is what we can offer them here in Australia.

In choosing as our theme "Freedom from Fear" we are hoping to draw attention not just to the fear that compels refugees to run, but the relief they feel when they are welcomed into another country and given the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Logo for Refugee Week

In sharing ideas and strategies, the UK Refugee Week Consortium has given permission for its Refugee Week logo to be used in Australia. The many colours in the logo speak of the diversity and energy brought to the welcoming country by refugees from many backgrounds. The logo is available for use by any organisation holding events in conjunction with Refugee Week which are in keeping with the Refugee Week objectives of promoting understanding of refugees and asylum seekers; and celebrating the contributions and achievements of people who have experienced life as a refugee.

Each organisation using the Refugee Week logo is required to inform the Refugee Council of Australia of the event, for inclusion in the national Refugee Week calendar. Events can be registered by sending an email, outlining the event details, to info@refugeecouncil.org.au

