



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

July 11, 2008

Welcome to the latest bulletin from the Refugee Council of Australia. We welcome feedback, ideas or information worth sharing. Please contact us at info@refugeecouncil.org.au.

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Refugee Week 2008 highlights national achievements and global challenges

Refugee Week 2008 was an outstanding success, with more than 130 events held across Australia. The week provided many opportunities to raise public awareness of the countless achievements of people who have come to Australia as refugees and of the issues facing refugees and displaced people around the world today. Events included community celebrations, seminars, art and photographic exhibitions, film screenings, sporting events and public launches in several cities. The Refugee Council would like to thank all who organised events, with particular thanks for the coordination carried out in South Australia by [MRCSA](#) and the SA Refugee Week Committee, in Victoria and NSW by the state Refugee Week committees and by [VORTCS](#) in Brisbane for the World Refugee Day Community Festival. At the Sydney launch, SBS sports broadcaster Les Murray told the story of his escape from Hungary as an 11-year-old and his pride in the achievements of refugees who have settled in Australia. A transcript of his speech is at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/refugeeweek.html#lesmurray>

Travel loan burden leaves humanitarian arrivals in poverty

Many new Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) arrivals are living in poverty as they try to repay the cost of their travel to Australia, a new RCOA report has found. Based on research conducted in Victoria with the support of the Reichstein Foundation, the report found that many SHP proposers arranged loans to cover travel costs through informal networks, leaving the new arrivals to begin repaying the loans as soon as they arrived in Australia. The debt burden contributed to new arrivals living in overcrowded conditions and increased their exposure to poverty, malnutrition, homelessness and bankruptcy. The report, "Who Bears the Cost of Australia's Special Humanitarian Program?", recommends that the Australian Government cover the travel costs of SHP arrivals as it does for offshore refugee visa entrants or acts to broaden access to interest-free travel loans. The report can be viewed at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/reports/Travel_Costs_report.pdf

Immigration Minister commences dialogue on ministerial intervention process

On July 9, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, invited RCOA and representatives of 10 other organisations to join him for a four-hour dialogue about how the ministerial intervention process could be improved. The meeting was very constructive and included an exploration of how Australia might introduce a complementary protection system to enable non-refoulement obligations from conventions other than the Refugee Convention to be considered as part of the protection visa application process. The Minister released a report he had received in January on possible changes to the ministerial intervention process. This report, from businesswoman Elizabeth Proust, and the Minister's media release are at <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2008/ce08065.htm> RCOA has released a statement, publicly welcoming the Proust report and the Minister's initiative - see <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/media.html>

Australia's 2008-09 humanitarian program balances Middle Eastern, African and Asian priorities

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, has announced Australia's 2008-09 refugee and humanitarian program. The core offshore program of up to 13,000 places will be split

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia
Phone: (02) 9211-9333 • Fax: (02) 9211-9288
info@refugeecouncil.org.au • Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.au
Incorporated in ACT • ABN 87 956 673 083

The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world

evenly between Africa, Asia and the Middle East, with 500 additional places allocated specifically to Iraqi refugees. This total allocation of 13,500 is in addition to the 600 places notionally set aside in 2007-08 for Iraqis (and their families) who worked with Australian forces. As in previous years, offshore and onshore protection visa grants will continue to be linked numerically, with onshore protection visas granted in 2008-09 included in the 13,500 places allocated. The Minister's announcement is at <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2008/ce08056.htm>

Joint Standing Committee inquiry into immigration detention

The Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration has announced an inquiry into Immigration Detention which will examine the criteria for detention and release, options for the conduct of detention centres and additional community-based alternatives to detention. Further details can be found at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/index.htm> Submissions are due on 18 July.

Media shock: Brisbane tabloid in horror blunder!

As if there weren't already enough myths about refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Australia, Brisbane's Courier Mail newspaper recently reported that the Australian Government was considering a plan to give illegal immigrants the dole. The blatantly false information in this report was republished the following day and then publicly defended by the Courier Mail in an editorial several days later, after ABC-TV's Media Watch rightly exposed the paper's pathetic attempts to justify the unjustifiable. RCOA drew attention to the false information in the report and encouraged concerned Australians to write to the Courier Mail – see <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/current/mediablunders.html>

Australia's most popular myth about refugees – that they receive \$1458 a month more in Centrelink benefits than aged pensioners – continues to be emailed around Australia by gullible or malicious people. This false information has even been published in the letters pages of numerous Australian newspapers and some radio programs, though most have since corrected the public record. The truth on this matter can be found at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/current/index.html#email>

Bankstown City Council adopts RCOA's Refugee Charter

Bankstown City Council, in Sydney's south-west, has become the first local government authority in Australia to adopt the 12-point Refugee Charter developed by RCOA in 2004. The Charter outlines principles of refugee protection, based on the provisions of international conventions and agreements. The Charter was formally signed on the Council's behalf by Councillor Khal Asfora at the Bankstown showing of the Refugee Film Festival. The Council translated the Charter into Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Dinka, Farsi and Vietnamese. These translations and background on the Charter can be found at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/who/charter.html>

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday 15 to Thursday 17 July – Sydney

Exhibition: Did You Know? This exhibition will showcase migration experience and history and be an opportunity for local residents and for young people visiting Sydney to learn more about the important role migrants have played in the economic and social development of Australia.

Venue: Level 4, The Terrace, Australian Museum, Corner of College and William Sts, Sydney

Details: 10am to 5pm; For more information please contact Mr Fadi Nemme on (02) 8255 6725 or fadi.nemme@crc.nsw.gov.au

Wednesday 16 July – Sydney

Multi-faith Prayers for Global Peace and Social Justice – hosted by the NSW Community Relations Commission

Venue: MacLaurin Hall, Sydney University. Details: 4 to 6pm. For information, contact Mr Fadi Nemme on (02) 8255 6725 or fadi.nemme@crc.nsw.gov.au

Thursday 17 July – Sydney

Multi-faith Concert "From Our Hearts to Yours" to Celebrate Catholic World Youth Week.

Venue: The Emanuel Synagogue, 7 Ocean Street, Woollahra

Details: from 7.30pm; Tickets \$25, Bookings please call (02) 9361 6035 or email: erniefrbnaibrith@ozemail.com.au

Friday 18 July - Melbourne

Benefit Dinner: Darfur Australia Network: Performances, speakers and live auction throughout the evening

Venue: Brunswick Town Hall, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Details: Doors open at 6.00pm; Tickets \$40 Concession; \$60 Adults; \$80 Ticket with donation to DAN

To purchase tickets please go to www.darfuraustralia.org/events/tickets or call (03) 8060 5659.

Wednesday 30 July - Sydney

Seminar: Asylum Denied and Refugee Roulette: Achieving Administrative Justice in Refugee Status Determinations with Professor Phillip Schrag, Georgetown University and Professor Mary Crock, Sydney Law School

Venue: Minter Ellison Room, Level 13, Sydney Law School, 173-175 Phillip St, Sydney

Details: 5.30–7pm; RSVP to law.scil@usyd.edu.au Free seminar

Friday 1 August and Saturday 2 August – Tasmania

Conference: Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Culturally Diverse Communities: Experiences and Strategies.

Venue: University of Tasmania, Launceston Campus

Details: Registration closes on Friday 18 July. For further information about submission of papers and participation in discussion panels, please visit: <http://adcet.dev.visualeyes.net.au/diversity/>

Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 August

International Unity in Diversity Conference – Townsville, QLD

Early Bird booking closes by June 30

For further details contact: Ika Tewu, Office of Cultural Fest 08, International Unity in Diversity

Conference, Phone (07) 4772 4800, Fax (07) 4772 1840 unityindiversityconference@bigpond.com

and <http://www.culturalfest.org/unityindiriversityconference.htm>

Friday 10 October

Seminar: The Crisis of Human Rights in Sri Lanka with Professor Ivan Shearer, Shiva Pasupati, Dr Manuepillai, Paul Dominic, Dr Brian Seniveratne

Venue: Professorial Board Room; Main Quad, Sydney University Campus, Broadway

Details: 3pm to 5pm; RSVP to law.scil@usyd.edu.au Free seminar

Monday 27 to Thursday 30 October – Manila, PHILIPPINES

2nd Global Forum on Migration and Development “Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development”

*Details: Applications to attend are now on-going and you may access the application form at the GFMD 2008 official website, www.gfmd2008.org. The deadline of submission of applications is on **15 July 2008**.*

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Report: UNHCR Global Trends 2007

For a full copy of this report detailing the global situation for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons please visit: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf>

New Resource: “Empowering Refugees: A Good Practice Guide to Humanitarian Settlement”

This guide, produced by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship with assistance from RCOA, presents government and non-government initiatives from around Australia, that assist humanitarian entrants to settle in Australia in the key areas of health, education, employment, law and community harmony as well as focusing on key client groups: youth, family and women. To download a full copy of the guide please visit:

http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering_refugees/index.htm

New DVD – Sudanese Youth In Transition

The University of Western Sydney has created a DVD that will assist young people as they begin the journey from high school to vocational training, higher education or employment in Australia. For further information about the DVD and to order copies please contact Louise Eljiz, UWS Office of University Engagement, on 02 4620 3148 or email oue@uws.edu.au

New DVD – Becoming a Community Broadcaster

Produced by Melbourne community radio station 3ZZZ, this DVD documentary uncovers the world of community ethnic radio and examines each step involved in getting on air as an aspiring broadcaster. It also highlights the challenges and rewards of becoming a community broadcaster and provides insights, histories and personal stories of both experienced and new broadcasters. For more information please contact 3ZZZ Marketing Department at media@3zzz.com.au

Briefing Paper: Sri Lanka. Protracted Conflict: Protection Challenges for Humanitarian Agencies

by Hazel Lang and Anita Knudsen. Internal displacement in Sri Lanka exists in the context of protracted war. Humanitarian agencies seeking to enhance the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) confront operational realities of working in a difficult—politicised and insecure—environment. Based on field interviews with humanitarian agencies in Eastern Sri Lanka, this briefing paper examines challenges and obstacles of humanitarian protection in protracted conflict. To download the paper please visit: <http://www.austcare.org.au/media/56973/arcsrilankabp-lowres.pdf>

Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal: Anticipating the Impact of Resettlement

by Susan Banki from Austcare. When refugees resettle to new countries, populations left behind are affected. These include remaining camp residents, political leaders and local residents. Based on field interviews in Nepal, this briefing paper presents a preliminary forecast of the impacts to remaining populations of the mass resettlement of Bhutanese refugees currently residing in Nepal. To download the please paper visit <http://www.austcare.org.au/media/56970/arcnepalbp-lowres.pdf>

New films explore discrimination and settlement experiences

The Refugee Health Research Centre's Good Starts Arts project has been made available on the RHRC website (www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/). The two films, *See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians* and *Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australian young women*. The films explore the settlement experiences of young people from refugee backgrounds in different ways and are at once challenging, fascinating and engaging. The films can be viewed at the above web address.

Culture vital to social inclusion agenda, says Race Discrimination Commissioner

At the recent MRCSA Conference on Social Inclusion in Adelaide, Race Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma urged the Australian Government to ensure that culture was an integral component of its social inclusion agenda and that “an approach of social inclusion should be a consultative one that brings new and emerging communities along from the outset.” The speech is at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/speeches/race/2008/20080627_social_inclusion.html

Children's book: Ziba Came on a Boat

Written by Liz Lofthouse and illustrated by Robert Ingpen, *Ziba Came On a Boat* is the moving story of a little girl whose family has lost almost everything. This beautiful picture book takes us on her brave journey to make a new life, far from home. Published by Kane Miller
<http://www.kanemiller.com/book.asp?sku=386>

New Report: Rebuilding Social Support Networks in Small and Emerging Refugee Communities

Produced by Whittlesea Community Connections, this report highlights the importance of community support networks and the extent to which they provide much of the informal settlement support and social connections necessary to achieve successful settlement outcomes. The report is available from www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

A busy person's digest of some of the recent Australian 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)

No detainees, but a huge cost blowout

The cost of building a new Christmas Island Detention Centre last year was \$318 million. Since the completed centre was handed over to the Immigration Department there have been no detainees but the cost of maintaining the centre is still \$7.1 million a year. *(Sydney Morning Herald, 4 July)*

UNHCR resettlement conference focuses on helping refugees at risk

Representatives from 34 countries have gathered for the UN Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement focusing on efforts to improve the safety and protection of refugees who continue to be at risk in the countries in which they have sought asylum. "A lot has been said and written on the responsibility to protect, but we would like to seize this opportunity to encourage states to think of resettlement as a practical form of sharing this responsibility," said UNHCR Deputy Director for International Protection Vincent Cochetel. *(Reuters, 2 July)*

Agent obtains warrant to evict Sudanese refugee family

A Sudanese family of two adults and five children are being evicted from their Brisbane home and, despite searching for eight weeks, they have not been able to find alternative accommodation. A local church minister who has assisted the family says the family and others face discrimination because of their race and the size of their families. The severe housing shortage is also blamed for the crisis. *(Courier Mail, 1 July)*

More than 30,000 Burmese refugees resettled

The number of refugees from Burma to be resettled from Thailand to third countries has topped 30,000 since resettlement began in 2005 in what the UNHCR has described as the world's largest resettlement operation. 123,500 refugees remain in camps along the Thai-Burma border and many have been living in the camps for decades *(AP, 26 June)*

Iraqi soccer players to stay after winning claims for asylum

Three members of the Iraqi national soccer team have been given permanent visas to remain in Australia after claiming asylum in late 2007. *(West Australian, 26 June)*

Government moves to amend migration laws

Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans has introduced the Migration Legislation Amendment Bill (1) 2008 which outlines more than 100 changes to migration and citizenship laws. *(AAP, 25 June)*

Playing God with sanctuary

Oxfam and A Just Australia have released a report which outlines a process of complementary protection which was developed by the Refugee Council of Australia, the National Council of Churches and Amnesty Australia and supported by 29 organisations. *(Australian Policy Online, 23 June)*

Improve health care for refugees on World Refugee Day

Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation has called on the Government to ensure that all refugees and asylum seekers have access to the same level of medical services as other Australians. ANF Secretary Ged Kearney has said that asylum seekers on temporary bridging visas and those awaiting the outcome of their applications must have access to Medicare and the PBS. *(Medical News Today, 23 June)*

Two jailed over fatal attack on refugee

The killers of a young Sudanese refugee who was the victim of a brutal attack in Melbourne in 2006 were sentenced to three years imprisonment. *(The Age, 23 June)*

Migrant English teachers oppose restructure

Teachers and managers from migrant education services are striking in protest over restructures to the education system which could result in the loss of up to 10 per cent of services provided to migrant refugee students. *(ABC News Online, 23 June)*

Tragedy of refugee Australia sent back - Opinion

Mary Ann Toy tells the detailed story of the case of Mr Zhang, a Chinese asylum seeker who was refused protection by the Australian Government and deported. Leading up to his recent suicide, Mr Zhang was reportedly imprisoned and tortured by Chinese authorities for “shaming” China by writing about human rights abuses while in Australia. *(Sydney Morning Herald, 21 June)*

The refugee system is still badly broken – Opinion

Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre Coordinator, David Manne discusses the issues and inconsistencies which continue to plague Australia’s refugee protection system. Mr Manne argues that the recent suicide of deported Chinese asylum seeker, Mr Zhang highlights critical problems with a system that has failed to make the right decision. *(The Age, 21 June)*

Australian charities want a review of refugee policy

Oxfam has released a report highlighting the experiences of refugees and criticises the process of ministerial intervention saying it has given the Immigration Minister too much power over individual cases. Immigration Minister Chris Evans has previously indicated he will review the process. *(Radio Australia, 21 June)*

Survey names worst places for refugees

An annual survey conducted by the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants has named China, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Bangladesh as among the worst violators of refugees’ rights. The list was based on refugees being turned away or returned to further persecution, violence or death. *(The Australian, 20 June)*

Rudd talks climate change with Kiribati

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has discussed the impacts of climate change on the citizens of Kiribati with President Anote Tong. Mr Tong said that his people rejected the notion of being environmental refugees, but would like to be relocated with dignity in the event of land loss due to rising sea levels. He said that discussions with Prime Minister Rudd and Climate Change Minister Penny Wong had been positive. *(Sydney Morning Herald, 20 June)*

Most refugees will come from Africa, Asia and the Middle East

Part of an intake of 14,000 refugees in the coming year, the Australian Government has set aside 500 places for Iraqis and 600 places for Iraqi nationals who have assisted Australian troops. There will be an equal share of refugees from African, Asia and the Middle East and the Immigration Minister said that “the regional allocations for Australia’s humanitarian program had been decided after considering the views of the community, non-government organisations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.” *(Herald Sun, 20 June)*

Australia must do better on refugee treatment: Evans

In a speech to mark World Refugee Day, Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans has said that Australia’s international reputation on the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers has been tarnished and the Government must rebuild confidence in our system. Senator Evans said that, “we are focused on strengthening and promoting Australia’s contribution to refugee protection to ensure it continues to be a source of national pride for Australians into the future.” *(ABC News, 20 June)*

Dangerous trips to new lives - Opinion

SBS broadcaster Les Murray gave a speech to open Refugee Week in NSW on 13 June and spoke about his own family’s experiences as refugees coming to Australia from Hungary in the late 1950s. Les Murray also highlighted the support Australia has given to more than 700,000 refugees since the end of World War 2 and the contribution that many refugees have made to Australian society. *(Daily Telegraph, 20 June)*

Aussie mateship is bedrock of our refugee policy – Opinion

Kevin Liston, Director of the Australian Refugee Association, speaks about the tradition of mateship and that this forms the basis of our response to refugees and asylum seekers including offering people whose lives are shattered through no fault of their own a place to call home and the opportunity to rebuild their lives. (*The Adelaide Advertiser, 19 June*)

Refugee Week: Detention centre inspections to begin

Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes, reflects on changes that have taken place in Australia's refugee system and changes which still need to be made. As Refugee Week commenced, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was preparing to conduct annual inspections of Australia's detention centres (*Media Release, HREOC, 18 June*)

Grants to help refugees with citizenship test

During Refugee Week, Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans announced that the Australian Government will provide \$3.4million in funding to assist refugees and others who may require special assistance in preparation for the citizenship test. The grants will be provided to 33 community organisations including migrant resource centres and other support agencies. (*Media Release: Immigration Minister, 18 June*)

Sydney asylum seekers protest over death

Detainees at Villawood Detention Centre have peacefully protested against forced deportations following the recent suicide of returned Chinese asylum seeker Mr Zhang. (*Nine.msn, 18 June*)

Climate change refugees the forgotten people – Opinion

Climate Justice Coordinator for Friends of the Earth, Emma Brindal, argues that Refugee Week provides an opportunity to highlight the plight of people who will become displaced in the future due to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels. Brindal also urges the Australian Government to agree to requests from small Pacific Island nations to provide sanctuary to those who may be affected by climate change. (*The Age, 18 June*)

Afghanistan and Iraq refugee numbers up

A recent report from UNHCR shows that conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are creating new waves of refugees. With refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan making up almost half of the total refugees under UNHCR's global mandate, total numbers have increased from 9.9 million in 2006 to 11.4 million in 2007. Numbers of internally displaced persons have also increased from 24.2 million to 26 million in 2007. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has said that after a steady decline in numbers between 2001 and 2005, the last two years have shown an increase. (*News.com, 17 June*)

Hmong refugees' scant Aussie hope – Opinion

Lawyer and freelance journalist Joanna Maxwell asks why the Australian Government isn't doing more to help the thousands of Hmong refugees living in the Petchabun refugee camp 350 kilometres north of Bangkok. (*Eureka Street, 17 June*)

Rudd is 'talk, no action' on refugees

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Coordinator Kon Karapanagiotidis has said, while there was a lot of talk from the Rudd Government about improving the situation for asylum seekers, there was little real action. While abolishing the Temporary Protection Visa would streamline the process for many, there were still thousands of asylum seekers in the community forced to live close to poverty and at risk of homelessness without the right to work or access to Medicare. (*Moreland Leader, 16 June*)

Refugee housing boost urged

The Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia has urged the Government to provide more affordable housing to refugees and for a longer period of time. (*ABC News Online, 16 June*)

China dissident commits suicide after forcible deportation

Refugee advocates have criticised the Government's treatment of asylum seekers following the suicide of a Chinese man who was refused asylum in Australia and deported. Mr Zhang was reportedly beaten and tortured by Chinese authorities following his deportation and recently committed suicide.

Immigration Minister, Senator Chris Evans has said that he will be seeking more information about the case and that "any suggestion that someone has suffered persecution would be something that will be looked at quite seriously." (*ABC News Online, 16 June*)

Refugee Week: A Place to Call Home

Immigration Minister, Senator Chris Evans has said that people all over Australia will join in celebrations this week to mark Refugee Week and UN World Refugee Day on June 20. Senator Evans said that "people who arrive here as refugees add particularly vibrant threads to the material that is building our nation." (*Media Release Immigration Minister, 15 June*)

Citizenship test is flawed: review body

The former diplomat Richard Woolcott has said the citizenship test is flawed and discriminates against people who do not have English as a first language, Mr Woolcott also said that the test poses yet another hurdle for refugees who have fled persecution and that many of the questions were about things which people didn't really need to know in order to become a good citizen. (*The Age, 15 June*)

Celebration, lights, action: World Refugee Day 2008

Throughout the world there will be celebrations, activities and events leading up to the UN World Refugee Day on June 20. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres will open celebrations in London's Trafalgar Square which will be converted into a refugee camp for a day to highlight the plight of refugees from Darfur. (*Reuters, 13 June*)

Government launches immigration detention inquiry

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration will review the criteria for detention, the length of time spent in detention, accountability and transparency measures and determine possible alternatives. Chairperson of the Committee Labor MP Michael Danby said that "there are perhaps situations where people could live in the community and comply with the law over their detention by living outside. We want to have a more creative and open mind to ideas of handling people like that." There are currently 461 people in immigration detention centres throughout Australia. (*ABC News Online, 10 June*)

Values change for migrants

In a change from the previous government's "Living in Harmony" programs the Department of Immigration and Citizenship will focus on creating tolerance through "respect, fairness and inclusion". (*Herald Sun, 10 June*)

A refugee building bridges

Medal of the Order of Australia recipient, Maha Krayem Abdo, has been a long standing advocate for the rights of Muslim women and once debated the Reverend Fred Nile on national television after he called for Muslim women to be banned from wearing their traditional robes because he believed they could conceal weapons. A refugee from Lebanon, Ms Krayem Abdo was also awarded the 2002 NSW Premier's Award for her role in setting up the Muslim Foster Care service. (*Sydney Morning Herald, 9 June*)

Bradman may be dropped from test

Former diplomat Richard Woolcott has said the main problem with the citizenship test was that many of the questions were too difficult and that many migrants and refugees would not know about Bradman or Walter Lindrum. Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans also told a senate committee that he himself had difficulty answering some of the questions. "For refugees who have come from war-torn areas like Sierra Leone, the Congo and Liberia through the UNHCR process, the test provides another level they have to jump through before they can feel safe," Mr Woolcott said. (*The Age, 9 June*)

Nepal urged to end attacks on Bhutanese refugees

Representatives from seven Western governments including Australia have expressed deep concern over violent attacks on exiled Bhutanese seeking resettlement and aid workers assisting them. (*Reuters, 7 June*)

'Feral Judge' furphy In the human rights debate – Opinion

Associate Professor Simon Rice argues that the establishment of a charter of human rights in Australia would not allow judges to usurp the authority of Parliament. Further to this, Rice also discusses human rights laws that have been enacted in the Victorian and ACT Parliaments and that rather than losing 'power', these laws have enabled Parliamentarians to "have a stronger sense of their authority, and a much better grasp of their relationship with the judiciary." (*ABC Online, 6 June*)

Australia to take in 3,000 Burmese refugees

The Australian Government has rejected a special quota for Burmese refugees following the impact of Cyclone Nargis, but has said that it will commit to taking around 3,000 Burmese refugees as part of the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program. Immigration Minister, Senator Chris Evans has said that there is a need for Australia to balance the needs of Asian, African and Middle Eastern refugees when deciding the humanitarian intake. (*ABC News, June 5*)

Fiji, PNG added to people trafficking list

The United States has added Pacific countries including Fiji and Papua New Guinea to its 'third tier' blacklist of countries trafficking people for labour and sexual exploitation. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said human trafficking deprives people of their human rights and dignity and "bankrolls the growth of organised crime". (*Radio Australia, 5 June*)

Box Hill priest blasts estate agents

Anglican priest Father Graham Reynolds has criticised local real estate agents and the Government's settlement services program after it took 28 applications to find one family a house. With a shortage in crisis accommodation and reports of racist attitudes from some real estate agents, many large refugee families in the area are at increasing risk of homelessness. (*Leader News, 4 June*)

Refugee advocates on compassion watch

Despite the Rudd Government's rollback of the 'Pacific Solution' and review of long-term detention cases, refugee advocates including the former Human Rights Commissioner, Sev Ozdowski say the culture within the Immigration Department remains unchanged. (*ABC Radio, AM, 3 June*)

Iraqi family board the flight to Australia and the end of their journey

Mr Hassan Sami Al-Badri and his family have been offered a permanent settlement place in Australia after spending seven years in Indonesia. While Indonesian authorities have permitted the family and many other refugees to remain in the country, they face restrictions on their legal and work rights. UNHCR representative in Jakarta Robert Ashe has said that a "solution has now been offered by Australia, a strong supporter of UNHCR's work both in financial contributions and in terms of providing resettlement opportunities to refugees from many parts of the world." (*Relief Web, 2 June*)