



# Refugee Council of Australia

## **BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS**

**27 August 2009**

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](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.au).

*Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia*

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### **NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL**

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#### **Senate to vote on work rights changes for asylum seekers**

The Senate will vote next month on whether to disallow last month's changes to asylum seekers' access to employment and Medicare services. New regulations introduced by Immigration Minister Chris Evans from July 1 replaced the old "45 day rule" with a system which allows more categories of asylum seekers who comply with the Migration Act to support themselves and have access to basic health care while their status is resolved. These changes were introduced by regulation rather than legislation and can be disallowed by a majority vote in the Senate. Liberal Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells has introduced a motion to disallow the regulation. It is expected that the Senate will vote on the motion on or after September 7. To pass, the motion would need the support of all Coalition and both Independent Senators (Nick Xenophon and Stephen Fielding). RCOA encourages members and supporters to contact Coalition and Independent Senators to express support for the changes. This week, we have written to all Senators encouraging them to vote against the motion to disallow the regulation. Our letter can be viewed at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/current/index.html#45>

#### **Improvements recommended for on-arrival refugee settlement strategy**

RCOA has put forward 34 recommendations for improvements to on-arrival support for refugees and humanitarian entrants in a response to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) discussion paper on the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). The discussion paper was released by DIAC in July, to seek views on adjustments to IHSS prior to the call for tender for IHSS services from mid 2010. The RCOA submission comments on the IHSS principles, housing models, post-arrival cultural orientation, health strategies, the role of volunteers in IHSS and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP), the need for improved support to SHP proposers, regional settlement and the need for clarification of settlement support given to vulnerable Protection Visa holders. The RCOA submission can be viewed at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/submissions.html>

#### **Senate committee completes inquiry into Detention Reform Bill**

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee has completed its inquiry into the Immigration Detention Reform Bill, taking up some concerns raised by RCOA and other organisations. The Bill's stated aim is to put into legislative effect the "Detention Values" announced by Immigration Minister Chris Evans in July 2008. RCOA has raised concerns (through its submission and at the August 7 public hearing) about the absence of some of the values from the legislation and some provisions which are at odds with these values. Our concerns include: the need for an independent guardian for unaccompanied children; the lack

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

of clarity about which aspects of the legislation apply to people detained on Christmas Island; the stipulation that resolution of a non-citizen's immigration status can be a purpose of detention; the absence of a requirement to release a detainee once there is no further basis to detain; the lack of clarity as to how discretionary decisions to detain are to be made; and the need for judicial review of detention. Our submission is at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/submissions.html>

The Senate committee's report recommends eight changes to the Bill. The Liberal and Greens Senators have put forward separate minority reports, with the Liberals expressing opposition to the legislation and the Greens putting the case for additional changes. The committee's report, information on the Bill, the submissions received and a transcript of the public hearing can be viewed at [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon\\_ctte/migration\\_2009/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/migration_2009/index.htm)

### **Poll reveals majority support for equal treatment for asylum seekers**

A Neilsen opinion poll has revealed that 69% of Australians believe that asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat should have access to the same legal protections as those who arrive by plane. The poll, commissioned by Amnesty International, also showed that many Australians are misinformed about the numbers of asylum seekers arriving by boat, with the majority thinking that 60% or 80% of asylum seekers travelling to Australia come by sea. For more details on the poll, see <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/21417/>

### **End excision policy and increase focus on refugee protection, RCOA says**

On July 31, RCOA CEO Paul Power joined UNHCR Regional Representative, Richard Towle, Refugee Coordinator for Amnesty International Australia, Dr Graham Thom, and Acting National Coordinator of A Just Australia, Zhi Yan, at an ALP Conference Fringe seminar on refugee policy and security in the Asia-Pacific region. Speaking on the evening before the ALP's immigration platform was to be debated at the ALP conference, Mr Power acknowledged the impressive list of positive policy changes which have occurred since the ALP's election to government. He called for the ALP to end the excision policy (which sees asylum seekers arriving by boat detained on Christmas Island while being processed under a system which denies them access to judicial appeal), to put greater emphasis on refugee protection in international cooperation on people movement in South-East Asia and to remove the numerical link between the granting of Protection Visas and the resettlement of refugees.

See <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/speeches.html>

### **ALP retains excision policy in party platform**

The Australian Labor Party's biennial National Conference has reiterated the party's support for retaining the excision policy. Despite efforts of some party members to remove the policy which excises Australian offshore islands from the migration zone and applies a different visa processing system for asylum seekers outside the migration zone, the policy remained part of the ALP platform passed by the conference in Sydney on August 1. Resolutions of the ALP national conference will form the core of the ALP's platform for the 2010 Federal election. On August 18, Immigration Minister Chris Evans declared that the Christmas Island detention arrangements would continue in a response to the latest report from the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. See <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2009/ce09074.htm>

### **Parliamentary committee recommends improvements to detention facilities**

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Migration has completed its inquiry into immigration detention with a third report, making 11 recommendations on detention facilities, services and transparency. These include: reconstruction of Stage 1 at Villawood detention centre; the upgrading of Perth detention centre; the removal of caged walkways, perspex barriers and electrified fencing from Christmas Island's North West Point detention centre; and the removal of razor wire from all immigration detention centres. The committee also

recommends that: wherever feasible, immigration residential housing be used in lieu of detention; physical and mental health facilities be upgraded on Christmas Island; and the Australian National Audit Office be engaged to review detention services and facilities. Additional recommendations relate to public release of information and access to detention centres by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the media. Liberal MP Petro Georgiou and Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young put forward separate dissenting reports, raising concerns about children being housed in detention facilities, the standard of facilities at Christmas Island's Phosphate Hill detention centre, the absence of judicial review of decisions to detain and the need for an Immigration Detention Health Review Commission. Liberal Shadow Minister Sharman Stone refused to endorse the committee report, arguing that she joined the committee too late to hear much of the evidence and has not received information that she has requested from Government. The committee's third report can be viewed at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/report3.htm>

### **RCOA reiterates concerns about citizenship test**

RCOA has reiterated its concerns about the Australian citizenship test in a submission to the Senate Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee inquiry into proposed changes to citizenship test legislation. We expressed our view that the citizenship test is an inappropriate method of determining whether a person is ready for Australian citizenship and that results from the first 18 months of the test's operation had confirmed our original fears that the test would discriminate against refugees and humanitarian entrants. However, we noted that the limited changes proposed are improvements to the original test arrangements introduced in 2007, particularly the test exemption for people who have experienced torture or trauma. Our submission is at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/submissions.html>

### **Other legislation before Parliament**

- After being passed by the House of Representatives in June with the public support of four Coalition MPs, the Abolishing Detention Debt Bill is now before the Senate with debate expected in early September. The Greens and both Independent Senators have expressed support for the ALP legislation.
- Legislation to introduce a system of "complementary protection" is expected to be introduced to Parliament in the second week of September. In May, Immigration Minister Chris Evans said the legislation would enable Australia's protection obligations under human rights treaties other than the Refugee Convention to be considered as part of the Protection Visa determination process and by the Refugee Review Tribunal.

## **COMING EVENTS**

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**Until Monday 31 August – throughout Victoria**

### **Victorian Multicultural Commission community consultations**

The consultations provide an open forum for the public to share views on the Victorian Government's activities and policies in multicultural affairs. There will also be information on community grants.

*Details:* To find out more about the consultations go to the Victorian Multicultural Commission's website <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au> or call (03) 9651 0678 or (03) 9651 0651

**Thursday 27 August - Sydney**

### **Free mentor training program for those working with Tibetans**

TAFE Northern Sydney Institute is offering a free mentor training program for people interested in working as mentors to Tibetan people.

*Details:* Information session on Thursday 27 August; 5.30pm-6.15pm; Library, Room 222, M Block, Northern Beaches College of TAFE, 154 Old Pittwater Rd., Brookvale; the course will run over 7 evenings starting 3 Sept 5.30pm-8.30pm; for more info call Daena Tyerman Outreach Coordinator (02) 9448 4426

**Friday 28 August – Sydney**

**Global Health Day 2009, presented by Sydney Law School and the Sydney Medical School**

This full day symposium brings together leading national and international experts on the key health issues facing the global community. Topics to be addressed include HIV/AIDS, disease surveillance and response, pandemic preparedness, the power of advertising, tobacco control and chronic diseases and injuries.

*Details:* 9am – 4pm (8.30am registration); \$35 incl GST full fee, \$15 concession incl GST; Sydney Law School, Building F10, Eastern Ave., Sydney University; contact (02) 9351 0248 for registration or email [law.events@usyd.edu.au](mailto:law.events@usyd.edu.au)

**Sunday August 30 – Melbourne**

**Festival of Refugees, hosted by Victorian Council of Churches**

Aboriginal Elder Reg Blow will welcome the refugees to the Festival. Performances from Sudan, Burma, Vietnam, West Papua, Sri Lanka, China and more.

*Details:* 3pm-5.30pm; \$10 admission; Box Hill Town Hall, 1022 Whitehorse Rd., Whitehorse; RSVP to Visier or Glenys (03) 9650 4511 or [vcc@vcc.org.au](mailto:vcc@vcc.org.au)

**Monday 31 August – Perth**

**Who Shapes Our Fears?**

A talk on the role governments, oppositions and the press play in alarming Australians about refugee boats, co-presented by CASE for Refugees and CARAD Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees. Guest speaker David Marr, writer for the Sydney Morning Herald and refugee advocate

*Details:* 6.30pm; entry by donation; Christ Church Grammar School Centre for Ethics, Senior Common Room, Queenslea Drive, Claremont; free parking. Contact CASE for Refugees on (08) 9227 7311

**September 1 to 4 – Perth**

**The Mental Health Services Conference of Australia and New Zealand.**

This conference incorporating the 1<sup>st</sup> Australasian Refugee Health Conference and the WA Transcultural Mental Health Conference *Details:* [www.themhs.org](http://www.themhs.org)

**Friday September 4 – Sydney**

**Fundraising trivia night for a children's hospital project in Sierra Leone**

The Bo Children's Hospital Project – an initiative of Dr Nuli Lemoh, paediatrician and Alumnus of Sydney University House – will provide facilities to improve health outcomes of the children of Sierra Leone. Dr Lemoh will speak during the evening.

*Details:* 7.30pm; Chatswood Gold Club, Beaconsfield Rd., Chatswood; free parking; \$20 admission; tables of 6 people; contact [bo@suihaa.org.au](mailto:bo@suihaa.org.au) or Gwen 0403 972 260 to book a place

**Tuesday September 8 - Melbourne**

**Launch of "A Case for Justice", new position paper from Asylum Seeker Resource Centre**

The new paper will focus on the legal process of seeking asylum in Australia. Guest speaker Julian Burnside QC

*Details:* 6.30pm for 7pm start; St James Conference Centre, 12 Batman St., West Melbourne (next to Asylum Seeker Resource Centre); RSVP to (03) 9326 6066; light refreshments provided; entry by MET ticket donation

**September 7 to 8 – Melbourne**

**Victorian ESL Conference: Transforming ESL Pedagogy, educating for success in learning**

*Venue:* The Sebel Albert Park Melbourne;

More information: [www.vatme.vic.edu.au/ESLConference09/Indexconference.htm](http://www.vatme.vic.edu.au/ESLConference09/Indexconference.htm)

**Wednesday 9 September – Canberra**

**Human Rights in Sri Lanka and Australia's Role**

An event organised by Sydney University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Speakers include Hon. John Dowd, President of the International Commission of Jurists Sydney and Vice President of ICJ Geneva, Ms Sharan Burrow, President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Dr John Whitehall, Paediatrician and Associate Professor in Public Health at James Cook University.

*Details:* 12.30pm -2pm; lunch provided; Room 1R5, Federal Parliament; RSVP by 4pm 10 August (strictly registered visitors only) to Dr Sam Pari 0433 428 967

### **Saturday 19 September – Adelaide**

#### **Red Cross Migration Community Forum Conference**

An inaugural forum for community supporters of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and bridging visa holders. Workshops and lectures will bring cultural issues and practice into focus, offering ways to improve your work while caring for yourself and others.

*Details:* All day forum from 9am (registration from 8am); Hawke Building City West Campus, 50 North Terrace, Adelaide; \$15; more information call (08) 8100 4642 or email [saitrs@redcross.org.au](mailto:saitrs@redcross.org.au)

### **Sunday 20 September to Sunday 27 September 2009 - Adelaide**

#### **Refugee Camp in Your City**

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) will erect a Refugee Camp in Your City to show what life is like for refugees and displaced people around the world. Experienced MSF field staff will be on hand to provide guided tours for groups around the replica refugee camp.

*Details:* Victoria Square, Melbourne City; 9am – 5pm daily; free; tours last for 45 mins; go to [www.refugeecamp.msf.org.au](http://www.refugeecamp.msf.org.au) for more info

### **Saturday 3 October to Sunday 11 October – Melbourne**

#### **Refugee Camp in Your City**

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) will erect a Refugee Camp in Your City to show what life is like for refugees and displaced people around the world.

*Details:* Treasury Gardens, Adelaide City; 9am – 5pm daily; free; tours last for 45 mins; go to [www.refugeecamp.msf.org.au](http://www.refugeecamp.msf.org.au) for more info

### **9 to 11 October – Wollongong NSW**

#### **ART4refugees**

A charity art show with all proceeds directly supporting the work of SCARF (Strategic Community Assistance for Refugee Families) Opening night 9 October; Illawarra Grammar School.

### **20 October – Sydney**

#### **Express yourself using art: art therapy classes for cancer sufferers from a CALD background.**

The Cancer Council NSW is offering people from a CALD background the chance to enrol in 6 weeks of free art classes. Starts October 20 for 6 weeks; 10am-12pm; Cancer Council Community Hub, Rouse Hill; for people from a CALD background who have been diagnosed with cancer, recently or in the past; basic level of English required; free; to register contact Katherine Watson (02) 9354 2071 or [katherinew@nswcc.org.au](mailto:katherinew@nswcc.org.au)

### **November 19 to 20 – Melbourne**

#### **International Conference on Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural relations**

*Details:* Guest speakers include Prof Bryan Turner (NUS, formerly of Cambridge), Prof Riaz Hassan (Flinders), Prof Stephen Castles (Oxford) and Prof Michael Humphrey (Uni of Syd). For more info go to [www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/icg/events/conf-2009.php](http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/icg/events/conf-2009.php)

### **3 to 9 December - Melbourne**

#### **Parliament of the World's Religions**

The world's largest and most diverse interfaith gathering with over 500 inspiring programs and many inspirational leaders including His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

For information or to register, visit [www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org) or call 1300 852 156

## **NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Locked Out: Position Paper on Homelessness of Asylum Seekers Living in the Community**

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre has produced a position paper on homelessness among asylum seekers. The paper looks at the impact of government housing, immigration and welfare policies on asylum seekers, includes a series of case studies and makes a number of recommendations for state and federal governments. <http://www.asrc.org.au/uploads/File/Locked%20Out.pdf>

### **We Have a Voice, Hear Us: Settlement experiences of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa**

This new report, from the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency and University of NSW's Centre for Refugee Research, provides an important expose of the resettlement and integration experiences in Australia of refugees and migrants from countries in the Horn of Africa. There are also concrete recommendations on how to better support their resettlement and integration in Australia.

<http://www.harda-australia.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/hardafullreport.pdf>

### **La Trobe Refugee Research Centre DVDs**

Using a range of collaborative and arts-based research methodologies, researchers and community artists worked with young people from Somalia, Southern Sudan and Afghanistan to develop materials exploring their experiences in Australia. Four DVDs were produced titled: See Through Me: Discrimination through the eyes of ten young Somali-Australians; Crazy: The everyday experiences of Sudanese-Australians; Home: An exploratory journey with young Somali-Australians; and Finding Light: Reflections of recently arrived Afghan boys living in Australia. Information about the project and links to the DVDs can be found at [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/goodstarts\\_arts.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/goodstarts_arts.html)

### **Special Collection on Refugees and Domestic and Family Violence**

To commemorate World Refugee Day on 20 June 2009, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House released the second in a series of Special Collections of research and resources on refugees and domestic and family violence. It includes information on domestic and family violence and the global context of violence against women, domestic and gender-based violence in international refugee camps, refugee women's experience of domestic violence in their countries of resettlement, culturally appropriate service provision for refugee women and resources for service providers and women. See <http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/specialcollectionsrefugees.htm>

### **New study: Telephone Interpreters in General Practice**

In this study, authors Yu-Ting Huang and Christine Phillips, explore barriers for nonmedical practice staff to accessing telephone interpreters via the Australian Translating and Interpreting Service, the world's largest free telephone health interpreter service, but a service which is still underused. Published in "Australian Family Physician" - <http://www.racgp.org.au/afp/200906/200906huang.pdf>

### **Report Credit and Debt Experiences of Immigrant and Refugee Women**

In 2008 Multicultural Centre for Women's Health implemented the Healthy Credit Project, which explored and addressed the credit and debt issues in immigrant and refugee women's lives. The report, "To Every Woman: Money, Power, Freedom", found that credit and debt are significant issues in the lives of immigrant and refugee women and that often, debt is poverty-related. <http://www.mcwh.com.au/healthprom/money.php>

### **Raising Kids Together: DVD available in five community languages**

Jointly produced by the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA), Information and Cultural Exchange, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and Multicultural Health and Community Service, this is a free information kit for families who have a child or young person with a disability. It is available in Arabic, Assyrian, Dari, Dinka, Juba Arabic and English. Call MDAA on 1800 629 072 for a free copy of the DVD and booklet.

### **Resource Booklet for men and their families on food safety and healthy lunchboxes**

Launched in June by NSW Refugee Health Service as part of the Fairfield Nutrition Project. Download from <http://www.sswahs.nsw.gov.au/sswahs/refugee/pdf/lunchbox.pdf> or ring (02) 8778 0770 for copies.

### **Family Planning NSW Fact Sheets**

Family Planning NSW Fact Sheets on a number of topics such as contraception, sexually transmittable diseases have been published in various languages including Arabic, Burmese, Dinka, Farsi and Swahili. The resources are available at <http://www.fpnsw.org.au/sex-matters/factsheets/105.html>

## OPPORTUNITIES

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### **Education grant for people of refugee background**

The Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) in Perth is offering financial support to torture and trauma survivors who are experiencing financial hardship in order for them to further educational dreams. For details, see <http://www.asetts.org.au/referral-services/enrichment-fund/>

### **Multicultural Women's Sports Leaders Program 2009**

This program aims to improve opportunities for the advancement of multicultural women in their sport or community organisation. Applicants must be of a multicultural background, over 18 years old, permanent residents and currently involved as a volunteer or paid employee of a sporting club or community organisation. The program will be held on October 24, 25 and 31 at Sydney Olympic Park from 9am-5pm. Further details from <http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/training/detail.asp?course=1826> or Rose Powell [rose.powell@dasr.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rose.powell@dasr.nsw.gov.au). Deadline September 18.

## REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

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A busy person's digest of some recent 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)

### **Government funding for asylum seekers**

Asylum seekers living in the community have received almost \$130,000 in government funding. Department of Immigration figures released on 20 August reveal that from August 1, 2008 to May 15, 2009, 98 asylum seekers were released into community detention on Christmas Island. (*West Australian, 21 August*)

### **Amnesty says detention conditions inhumane**

Amnesty International has condemned the Government's inhumane policy to hold asylum seekers in Christmas Island's high-security detention centre. "It is unconscionable for the Government to continue to promote its policies as humane when detainees are held in conditions described by the committee as extreme and inhumane", Graham Thom, Amnesty's Australia refugee campaign co-ordinator said. The Joint Standing Committee on Migration released its third and final report into immigration detention on 18 August. (*The Australian, 19 August*)

### **Opposition will vote against Labor's detention reforms**

Opposition spokeswoman on immigration, Sharman Stone, will seek amendments to a bill designed to give asylum seekers more time to claim asylum and give more independence to detainees while their cases are being assessed. A parliamentary committee, which includes Liberal MP, Danna Vale, says the government's detention practices are too harsh. The committee has called for more government transparency, including publication on the Department's website of the number of men, women and children detained. "We have an obligation to both the Australian and international community to ensure that all people in immigration detention are treated humanely and fairly," said the committee chairman, Labor MP Michael Danby. (*Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August*)

### **Christmas Island detainees allowed out for excursions**

Detainees inside the Christmas Island immigration detention centre are being allowed out into the community without guards, under a system in which island residents act as chaperones for approved excursions such as picnics, cultural events and outings. The Rudd government last year decided not to use a visiting area fitted with glass dividers that prevent contact between visitors and detainees. Many visits are now conducted in open-air areas inside the compound. A Sri Lankan asylum seeker spoke to *The Australian* about being allowed out of the detention centre accompanied by a local resident who took him to one of the island's Taoist temples to pray. (*The Australian, 18 August*)

### **Kurd asylum seeker detained on Christmas Island to be treated on mainland**

There is hope that asylum-seekers on Christmas Island suffering from mental health issues will be relocated to mainland Australia following the transfer of a Kurdish asylum-seeker to Melbourne to treat his depression. The man can now access refugee support groups and mental health services. Asylum

Seeker Resource Centre campaign coordinator Pamela Curr said, "This is the sort of fair and just policy that I would like to see applied again when it is warranted. There are a number of people (detained on Christmas Island), I believe, who are a cause for concern on mental health grounds and I think there are difficulties in accommodating them on Christmas Island." There are currently 735 people in immigration detention on Christmas Island; 623 are single men. The remaining 112 people, including 21 women and 66 children and adolescents, live in a converted construction workers camp in houses in community detention. (*The Australian, 17 July*)

### **Press Council upholds complaint brought by A Just Australia against The Australian**

Refugee advocacy group A Just Australia (AJA) brought a complaint against The Australian newspaper about language in four articles and an editorial about boat arrivals published in April 2009. AJA objected to the use of the term 'illegal' or 'illegals' in reference to unauthorised arrivals. The Press Council overall said the newspaper's coverage of boat arrivals in the articles was fair and balanced but the use of 'illegal' and 'illegals' was factually inaccurate. The Council cautioned the media to be careful in the use of such unqualified terms. (*The Australian, 17 August*)

### **Racist leaflets distributed in Victoria**

Leaflets warning residents of an influx of Africans has been criticised by the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria chair Sam Afra as 'racist scaremongering'. The first material was found last week on car windscreens in Mildura, northeastern Victoria, claiming the local council had tried to sneak 30 Sudanese into the the community. (*AAP, 14 August*)

### **Australian Government compensates failed Chinese asylum seekers**

Two Chinese citizens who failed in their bid to gain asylum in Australia have been tracked down in order to pay them compensation. The pair were part of a large group of applicants who had been forced to be interviewed by visiting Chinese officials at Sydney's Villawood detention centre. (*Radio Australia, 14 August*)

### **Sri Lankan asylum seekers detained**

Seventy seven suspected Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers have been taken to Christmas Island for processing after their boat was intercepted just north of Christmas Island. The boat was the 18<sup>th</sup> to arrive this year. On board were 75 adult males, one woman and one minor. (*The Australian, 14 August*)

### **Burmese refugees make a new life in WA**

There are now 42 Burmese workers at the WAMMCO abattoir following a trial 12 months ago of a small group to see how they would adapt to the work and the local community. "The Burmese quickly became integral to our operations, and have brought a new work ethic to the Katanning plant," WAMMCO's Katanning manager Tony Bessell said. (*Farm Weekly, 13 August*)

### **Labor for Refugees praises abolition of TPVs**

Labor for Refugees has issued a statement praising the Rudd government's abolition of temporary protection visas and scrapping the so-called Pacific Solution. The Group urged the government to bring Christmas Island back into the migration zone. (*SBS Radio World View, 12 August*)

### **Asylum cases being reviewed**

As of May 8, 2009, Immigration Minister Chris Evans was considering requests for asylum for 382 people whose application for protection had been rejected previously. (*AAP, 12 August*)

### **Gambler's Help assists refugees**

A multicultural program assisting migrant and refugee communities with gambling problems has been started by an organisation in Heidelberg (Victoria) called Gambler's Help. The program's project worker Jamila Mohamud said the problem had been identified by Somali community leaders. (*Heidelberg Leader, 11 August*)

### **African refugees air issues**

African communities living in Whittlesea (Victoria) met the Human Rights Commission about housing, employment and education issues. This was part of the commission's forthcoming report on the settlement of African communities in Australia. (*Whittlesea Leader, 11 August*)

### **Tasmanian Government project benefits refugees and business alike**

The Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet Community Development Division (Multicultural Tasmania) has funded the 'Creating Connections and Opportunities' project where local businesses provide up to eight weeks work experience to humanitarian entrants. The CCO project is not specifically intended to place trainees in jobs but grants of up to \$7000 may be available to assist with additional training or supervision costs. (*Tasmanian Business Reporter, 11 August*)

### **Officials investigated over child's removal**

Federal police are investigating immigration officials for possible criminal conduct in the kidnapping of a seven-year-old girl without her asylum seeker father's knowledge. In 2003, the girl was sent back to Tehran to be with her mother, while her father, the legal custodian, was in solitary confinement at Baxter Detention Centre. In 2007 Baxter was closed. Federal Police are now investigating whether immigration officials committed a crime under South Australian law, thereby circumventing federal deportation powers. Children in South Australia cannot be removed without their parent's consent. (*Sydney Morning Herald, 8 August*)

### **Federal Labor MP says checks on immigrants should be tightened**

Federal MP Kelvin Thomson, who represents the multicultural Melbourne seat of Wills, has called for Australia to slash its immigration intake so entrants can be better screened for terrorist links. Addressing year 12 students at a foreign affairs forum in Melbourne, he said, "given time, it could be possible to get to the bottom of the background of applicants from Somalia and elsewhere to work out whether they have an association with fundamentalist groups and make a rational assessment of whether they pose a risk." Meanwhile on ABC's AM program, Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes criticised Mr Thomson for linking the threat of terrorism with immigration. "In several of the instances of people that have been charged, they came here as young children, and reducing migration intakes or better vetting of migrants just wouldn't have addressed these issues." (*Sydney Morning Herald, 8 August and ABC Radio, 8 August*)

### **Young Somalis are 'easy targets'**

Ramdas Sankaran, president of the Ethnic Communities Council of WA, said he feared there would be a backlash towards Somalis and other people of African descent in WA following the terror raids in Melbourne. (*West Australian, 6 August*)

### **Police call for calm after terrorism arrests**

A Somali spokesman in Melbourne, Awes Amin, has said a teenage girl from his community was singled out and verbally abused in Heidelberg following the arrests of terrorism suspects. Mr Amin said the girl had been called a 'terrorist' as she was returning home from school. (*Herald Sun, 6 August*)

### **Housing crisis for asylum seekers: new report**

Asylum seekers and refugees are joining the numbers of homeless as the state and federal governments fail to provide adequate crisis housing, a new report by the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre says. The report, Locked Out: Position Paper on Homelessness of Asylum Seekers Living in the Community, says community groups can no longer carry the burden of providing housing for homeless asylum seekers. (*Maribyrnong Mail, 5 August*)

### **Warning came two years ago about youngsters susceptible to recruitment**

Dr Hersi Hilole, a Somali leader and Islamic scholar who lived in Sydney but now resides in Kuala Lumpur, has claimed he asked the Australian Government to fund an education program last year to prevent radicalisation among young Somalis. Dr Hilole said he approached parliamentary secretary for multicultural affairs and settlement, Laurie Ferguson, who refused the proposal. A member of the Somali Advocacy Action Group in Auburn, Mohamed Baaruud, said many in Sydney had been unhappy with Dr Hilole's comments. "If you are living here in Sydney, how do you know what is going on with people in Melbourne," he said. (*The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 August*)

### **Somali community leader concedes his community were not surprised by terror plans**

Abdurahman Osman, president of the Somali Community of Victoria, has warned his fellow community members to be 'alert' for terrorist activity. "Ninety-nine per cent of Somalis in Australia are against

terrorist attacks. But I have been saying we must stay on alert. It is a great worry. If al-Shabaab comes to Australia, we are in danger. This is what I believe,” Mr Osman said. (*The Australian*, 5 August)

### **Somali refugees in Australia need more support: expert**

Immigration authorities have been urged to provide more support for Somali refugees following the arrests of several Melbourne men allegedly linked to a Somali-based terror group. African Think Tank chairman, Dr Berhan Ahmed, has claimed young Somali refugees in Australia are at risk of involvement in robbery and drugs. Dr Ahmed claimed parents often responded by ‘pushing’ their children into religion which, if fanatical, could lead to ties with terrorist groups. (*The Age*, 4 August)

### **Liberal backbencher Danna Vale to retire from federal parliament**

Danna Vale, 64, who vowed to cross the floor to help Labor abolish immigration detention debts for asylum seekers, will retire from federal parliament at next year’s election. (*The Age*, 4 August)

### **Asylum for Lebanese asylum seeker denied**

Naji Mazloum, a former Lebanese political activist, will be deported to Lebanon, despite claims he will be tortured, jailed or murdered if he is sent back. “I feel like I’m going to die in this place, but if they send me back to Lebanon I definitely will.” (*Sunday Herald Sun*, 2 August)

### **Immigration Department will not confirm Christmas Island capacity**

Should the Christmas Island Detention Centre reach capacity, the Department of Immigration is refusing to answer queries on contingency plans. New figures show there are now 670 asylum seekers on the island, living in both the detention centre and community accommodation. In the detention centre, more than 550 of 800 beds are occupied. (*ABC News*, 31 July)

### **Minister Evans reminds public to acknowledge contribution refugees make to society**

At a Labor for Refugees event in Sydney, Immigration Minister Chris Evans, has said Australians have matured in their views about refugees. However he said some people still believed that refugees “spent the next 30 years living off Centrelink” after their arrival. He said, while there may be some initial cost to support refugees after they arrive, the vast majority go on to work and contribute significantly to the nation’s economy. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July)

### **Two asylum boats reportedly in distress**

The Australian Government has confirmed two boats were reported to be in distress off the Indonesian territory of Aceh. The condition of the boat was unclear and authorities would not say how many passengers were believed to be on board. (*The Australian*, 28 July)