



# Refugee Council of Australia

## **BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS**

**April 12, 2007**

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*

## **NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL**

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### **Sharing ideas on the lawns of Manning Clark's family home**

On the weekend of March 31 and April 1, Manning Clark House in Canberra hosted its sixth annual Weekend of Ideas on the topic "A Fair Go for Refugees?". Hosted on the lawns of the family home of the late Manning and Dymphna Clark, the Weekend of Ideas brought together an impressive collection of speakers who have been led the national debate on issues for asylum seekers over the past decade. The Dymphna Clark Lecture was given by Dr Eva Sallis, co-founder of Australians Against Racism. Manning Clark House's website includes some of the presentations given at the weekend, including Professor Frank Brennan SJ's analysis of the incoherence of the "Pacific solution" and former diplomat Tony Kevin's personal account of the response to his questions about the sinking of SIEV-X.

See Manning Clark House website: <http://www.manningclark.org.au>;

Frank Brennan's paper: [http://www.manningclark.org.au/papers/Frank\\_Brennan-Ethics\\_and\\_Morality-What\\_makes\\_a\\_civil\\_society.html](http://www.manningclark.org.au/papers/Frank_Brennan-Ethics_and_Morality-What_makes_a_civil_society.html);

Tony Kevin's paper: [http://www.manningclark.org.au/papers/Tony\\_Kevin-Media\\_and\\_Writing.html](http://www.manningclark.org.au/papers/Tony_Kevin-Media_and_Writing.html)

### **The growing debate about 'climate change refugees'**

The Refugee Council is receiving a growing number of calls from the media asking our view on "climate change refugees" – prompted, in part, by recent public statements from the Greens and the Labor for Refugees group. Questions we are being asked include why the 1951 Refugees Convention doesn't cover people displaced by climate change and whether the Refugees Convention should be expanded. As the debate about climate change progresses, it is clear that this issue will be raised again and again. The Refugee Council's website points out (<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/arp/faqs.html#whoref>) that the Refugees Convention is designed to protect people who have been forced out of their country of origin by a well-founded fear of persecution or conflict and are unable or unwilling to return. The continuing misuse of the term "refugee" to include people who are displaced by natural disasters or prompted to leave their homes for economic reasons makes it harder to focus public and political attention on the desperate situations of people fleeing because of persecution and conflict.

In our public discussion of the situation of people displaced by climate change, the Refugee Council is trying to get across a number of points, including:

- The plight of people who are being displaced or will be displaced by climate change needs focused international attention. Much more planning is possible than with refugee situations as it is possible to make predictions about who may be displaced and when that may occur.
- Rushing to offer a ready-made solution, based on resettlement strategies for refugees, would be a mistake. Strategies must begin with consultation of those who are most likely to be displaced, to ascertain their hopes for the future.
- In many cases, people may not need or want to be moved outside of their country of origin. Where people will not have the option of remaining within their country of origin, those being displaced may prefer to move to a country within their immediate region, rather than Australia. In these situations, Australia could play an important role in development assistance.

- Careful thought needs to be given to how best to relocate entire communities and to assist them to preserve their culture and identity in new surroundings. This is quite different from resettling individuals or families from a culture which is still being preserved in their country of origin.

## COMING EVENTS

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### **13 APRIL – Perth**

#### **'Ran Away' dance drama – Australian Asian Association, 275 Stirling St, Perth, 6.30pm**

Ishar Multicultural Centre for Women's Health in collaboration with the Living Dance Institute presents this evocative dance drama depicts the tragedy, hope and courage of refugee women's journeys and eventual integration into society. Performed by a dynamic mix of migrant women who use striking dance forms, the talented dancers portray the raw emotion, horror and turmoil at the heart of the refugee issue. All are invited to a pre-show traditional Indian dinner. \$50 per person. Proceeds benefit Ran Away project. RSVP to Shobhana Chakrabarti at [Shobhana@ishar.org.au](mailto:Shobhana@ishar.org.au) or (08) 9345-5335.

### **14 and 15 APRIL – Sydney**

#### **Indoor soccer tournament, Bonnyrigg Indoor Sports Centre**

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre is holding an Indoor Soccer Tournament on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007 at the Bonnyrigg Indoor Sports Centre. "CALD Cup" will look at bringing about 100 young people together in a professional soccer tournament in hopes of gaining recognition from the local soccer clubs for possible future sponsorships. Details: Deena Khamas (02) 8707 0632.

### **14 April – Brisbane**

#### **Eritrean cultural dinner Annerley Baptist Church, 560 Ispwich Rd, Annerley**

The Eritrean Women and Family Support Network Inc. is holding a Cultural Dinner on Saturday evening to fundraise for the group's restaurant to open in Moorooka. Details and bookings: Saba Abrahams on 0404 222 311 or [yirgha26@yahoo.com.au](mailto:yirgha26@yahoo.com.au)

### **16 and 17 APRIL – Brisbane**

#### **'Confronting Racism' seminar, Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care, Paddington**

The Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care and the Centre for Multicultural Community Development at the University of the Sunshine Coast are hosting 'Confronting Racism', an anti-racism training seminar for workers. Details: Katherine Moriarty on 0437 180 724 or e-mail [confrontingracism@yahoo.com.au](mailto:confrontingracism@yahoo.com.au)

### **18 APRIL – Melbourne**

#### **'Extra-Convention Refugees: Complementary Protection', Foundation House, 5.30pm**

La Trobe University and Foundation House present a seminar in their Refugee Research Seminar Series – 'Extra-Convention Refugees: Complementary Protection under Human Rights Law' presented by Dr Jane McAdam. To be held at Foundation House 6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick. Details: [rhc@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:rhc@latrobe.edu.au) or call (03) 9479 5874.

### **21 APRIL – Sydney**

#### **Singing, dancing and poetry on Central Africa, Granville, 2pm – 5.30pm**

Granville Youth and Community Recreation Centre present an afternoon of singing, dancing, poetry and brief speeches about central Africa. To be held at 3A Memorial Drive, Granville. For more information contact Edward on 0413 734 216 or David on 0422 018 240.

### **27 APRIL – Sydney**

#### **"Who owns the soul of Australia?", South Steyne, Darling Harbour, 12.45pm – 2pm**

NSW Fabians, in conjunction with the ALP National Conference Fringe event, are hosting a lunchtime seminar with Maxine McKew, former journalist now an adviser to Kevin Rudd and ALP candidate; Dr John Hirst, Associate Professor and Postgraduate Co-ordinator, La Trobe University; David Marr, journalist and author, chaired by Dr Geoff Gallop, President, NSW Fabian Society. Cost: \$10/\$5. Bookings essential. Contact Simon O'Hara - [simono@lhmu.org.au](mailto:simono@lhmu.org.au) or 0400 188 815.

## **1 May – Brisbane**

### **Multi faith forum, Griffith University**

The Multi-Faith Centre at Griffith University has organised a one day National Forum on "Living under Civil Laws and Religious Laws in Australia: Conflict or Harmony?" It will explore the practice of Christianity Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism under Australian law. Cost: \$25. Must RSVP by 16<sup>th</sup> April. For registration and more information see <http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/mfc>

## **17-23 JUNE – Refugee Week**

In 2007, Refugee Week will be celebrated from Sunday 17 June to Saturday 23 June, to coincide with World Refugee Day (Wednesday 20 June). The national theme for Refugee Week is "The Voices of Young Refugees". If you have an event that you would like to publicise, please email the details to [info@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.au)

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

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### **New report examines employment issues for refugees**

Murdoch University's Centre for Social and Community Research has produced a new paper "Refugees and Employment: The effect of visible difference on discrimination". Written by Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury, The report seeks to address a number of policy implications in the areas of refugee resettlement, qualifications and skills recognition, employment assistance for culturally and linguistically diverse migrants and especially refugees and equal opportunity and anti-discrimination. The sociological research project is funded by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Project scheme. Download from: [http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees\\_and\\_employment.pdf](http://www.cscr.murdoch.edu.au/refugees_and_employment.pdf)

### **Book outlines Australian campaign against landmines**

The Australian Network of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines has published a book of reflections on 15 years of its work to eradicate landmines. The book, "A Path is Made by Walking It", has been edited by Sr Patricia Pak Poy, the founder and the driving force behind the Australian campaign. It includes reflections from people who have played a part in the campaign, including the Refugee Council's vice-president Professor William Maley and CEO Paul Power. Copies (\$25 plus \$7.50 postage and handling) can be ordered from the ICBL Australian Network, GPO Box 9830, Adelaide SA 5001, phone/fax (08) 8234-8642 or email [australia@icbl.org](mailto:australia@icbl.org). For more information on the Australian campaign against landmines, visit <http://australia.icbl.org>

## **REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA**

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### **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)

#### **Cornelia Rau lodges compensation claim**

Cornelia Rau, the German-born Australian resident wrongly held in immigration detention in 2004, has lodged a compensation claim. Ms Rau, who has schizophrenia, spent 10 months in detention, including periods in isolation, after authorities failed to identify her as a missing person. Both her lawyer George Newhouse and Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews hope the claim can be settled out of court. Late last year, wrongly deported Australian citizen Vivian Alvarez received a significant settlement from the Federal Government. (*The Australian*, April 10)

#### **Chinese detainees maintain hunger strike**

A group of refugee supporters maintained a vigil outside Villawood detention centre in Sydney in support of eight Chinese detainees on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of a hunger strike. Ian Rintoul of the Refugee Action Coalition said the detainees were protesting against forced deportations. Two detainees had been taken to hospital for treatment. The Refugee Action Coalition says another 15 detainees are on a "wet hunger strike" and taking some fluids. (*West Australian*, April 10)

### **Greens plan Bill to recognise 'climate change refugees'**

The Greens will introduce a Bill to Federal Parliament to establish a process for recognising and accepting "climate refugees" in Australia. "Already the inhabitants of the Carteret Islands in Papua New Guinea are being relocated because of rising sea levels and New Zealand has an immigration program for climate refugees from Tuvalu and Kiribati," Senator Kerry Nettle said. (*Adelaide Advertiser, April 9*)

### **Congolese swimmers fail to board flight in Melbourne**

The search is on for two swimmers from the Democratic Republic of Congo who did not board their flight in Melbourne after the world swimming championships. The men have valid visas to remain in Australia until June 21. In 2006, 40 athletes and officials sought asylum in Australia after the Commonwealth Games. Of the 38 applications decided so far, 32 had protection visas granted, five were rejected and one is being reviewed. (*The Age, April 4*)

### **Dandenong mayor criticises support for Sudanese settlement**

The mayor of Greater Dandenong in Melbourne's south-east has criticised the Immigration Department for failing to provide adequate settlement services for Sudanese refugees. Cr Youhorn Chea, an ALP member who arrived from Cambodia in 1982, said newly-arrived refugees were provided greater support 25 years ago. Refugees were provided hostel accommodation on arrival where they had access to bi-lingual health care, employment services, banking, English classes and classes in Australian law, he said. (*Dandenong Leader, April 2*)

### **Psychological damage lingers for former immigration detainees**

Iraqi-born doctor Aamer Sultan gave participants in Manning Clark House's Weekend of Ideas a first-hand insight into the mental deterioration of immigration detainees. Detained at Villawood for three years, Dr Sultan spoke of the complex psychological scars remaining for many former detainees. Dr Louise Newman of the NSW Institute of Psychiatry said the damage would remain for generations. (*Sunday Canberra Times, April 1*)

### **Proposed citizenship test delayed closer to election**

The introduction of a citizenship test has been delayed because the Federal Government has yet to complete a booklet on which questions about Australia's history and values will be based. The citizenship bill is now likely to be introduced in the May session of Parliament. Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews said he was confident the test would be introduced by September or October. (*Weekend Australian, March 31*)

### **Indonesia in talks to join the Pacific Solution**

Australia is seeking to enlist Indonesia for the processing of future unauthorised boat arrivals. Before leaving for Jakarta to raise the proposal, Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews said the partnership would go ahead only if Indonesia agreed to process future unauthorised boat arrivals in accordance with UN regulations. (*The Australian, March 30*)

### **Karen refugees fear they will be thrown in jail**

Some Karen refugees from Burma now living in Melbourne's west fear they will be thrown in jail if they chose to study rather than find a job, a Karen youth leader says. Sherinald Shwe said language barriers made it difficult for new arrivals to understand their options and rights. Refugees are being harassed in the streets and find simple interactions with the community difficult, she said. (*Williamstown Star, March 27*)