

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

INCORPORATED IN A.C.T. - ABN 87 956 673 083

37-47 ST JOHNS RD, GLEBE, NSW, 2037
PO BOX 946, GLEBE, NSW, 2037
TELEPHONE: (02) 9660 5300 • FAX: (02) 9660 5211
info@refugeecouncil.org.au • www.refugeecouncil.org.au

June 14, 2006

RCOA BACKS SENATE COMMITTEE'S REJECTION OF MIGRATION BILL

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed the Senate committee report into the Migration Amendment Bill, calling on Parliamentarians to take the committee's advice and reject the legislation.

The Senate's Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee last night released its report into the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill, recommending that the Bill not proceed.

"The Senate committee's report was thorough and drew the only conclusion possible from a detailed and balanced investigation of the issues," President of the Refugee Council of Australia, John Gibson, said.

"Of the 136 submissions received by the committee, only one – from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs – supported the legislation."

Mr Gibson said the Refugee Council had repeatedly pointed out major defects in the legislation in discussions with and correspondence to Federal Parliamentarians.

"We are deeply concerned that, if the legislation is passed in its current form, people detained in Nauru or Manus Island will have not full legal representation and access to a genuine merits review and judicial review," he said. "Without this, it is not possible to guarantee that refugees will not be returned to danger, in contravention of Article 33 of the Refugees Convention.

"In addition to a preservation of legal rights, a fair system for processing claims for refugee status must include strict time limits on the processing of claims, no detention or detention-like conditions, comprehensive medical and psychiatric care, access to welfare services, special protections for unaccompanied minors and a guarantee of resettlement in Australia if no other state is willing to accept refugees within a clearly defined period."