

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

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PARLIAMENTARY VOTE ON MIGRATION BILL DIMINISHES AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION

Today's House of Representatives vote in favour of the Migration Amendment Bill is a regressive step which further sullies Australia's reputation as a compassionate nation, the Refugee Council of Australia says.

President of the Refugee Council of Australia, John Gibson, said that, while the vote was sadly predictable, the Government MPs who voted against the legislation or abstained deserve commendation and public support.

"The five Coalition MPs who opposed the legislation made a difficult choice in the face of strong pressure from within their party but, in doing so, have won the admiration of millions of Australians," Mr Gibson said.

"The Government may believe it can win votes by making a harsh regime for asylum seekers even harsher. However, it is alienating the many Australians who want their nation to be just and humane to people who are facing persecution and danger.

"This legislation diminishes Australia's reputation even further, as our Government seeks to put in place in a costly and ill-conceived regime which robs vulnerable people of basic rights."

Mr Gibson said many Australians would be expressing their concerns about the legislation to the Senators who will decide its fate.

"The Senators who are weighing up whether or not to support this legislation need only read the speeches of the four Government MPs who spoke against it yesterday," Mr Gibson said.

"Those four MPs have very succinctly highlighted the legislation's many shortcomings."