

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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REFUGEE COUNCIL WELCOMES WITHDRAWAL OF LEGISLATION

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed today's decision by the Prime Minister to withdraw the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill.

Chief Executive Officer of the Refugee Council of Australia, Paul Power, said that the withdrawal of the legislation came after four months of campaigning by many organisations and individuals concerned about the impacts the legislation would have had on already vulnerable people.

"The events of the past week have shown clearly that those concerns were shared by all the non-government parties and by a significant group of Government MPs and Senators, some of whom have been prepared to risk their political careers to oppose the Bill," Mr Power said.

"This is a small but significant victory for Parliamentary democracy. It illustrates that Australians with genuine concerns about the impact of legislation can, on occasions, have their voices heard."

Mr Power said that the legislation, had it been passed, would have further eroded the rights of people who were seeking protection from serious threats of persecution and physical danger.

"The Bill sent all the wrong messages about Australia, further undermining our nation's reputation as a compassionate society," he said.

"It was at odds with the positive trend of cultural change within the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs initiated last year after the Palmer report."

Mr Power expressed the gratitude of the Refugee Council of Australia to the many Labor, Coalition, Democrats, Greens, Family First and Independent MPs and Senators who listened to community concern and opposed the legislation.