



Refugee Council  
of Australia

December 8, 2008

## **OPPOSITION REWRITES HISTORY WITH CLAIMS ABOUT TEMPORARY PROTECTION**

Federal Opposition Leader, Malcolm Turnbull, is rewriting history with his attempt to claim that the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) policy was an effective strategy against people smuggling, the Refugee Council of Australia says.

Refugee Council chief executive officer Paul Power said the TPV policy was among the most inhumane, counter-productive and pointless policies in Australian immigration history.

The three years following the introduction of the TPV in October 1999 were the three highest ever for numbers of asylum seekers reaching Australia by boat, Mr Power said. Monthly arrivals increased from the previous peak of 286 to 1245 in November 1999, with another 9800 asylum seekers arriving by boat in the following three years.

“Rather than reducing people smuggling, there is evidence that the TPV policy led to an increase in people smuggling,” he said. “The denial of the right to family reunion to TPV holders prompted hundreds of members of separated families to take to the seas in an attempt to reunite. Tragically, some lost their lives while doing so.

“The TPV policy extended the misery for people found to be genuinely fleeing persecution, people who, in nearly all cases, were ultimately given Australian residency. Before leaving office, the Howard Government had given permanent residency to more than 9500 of the 11,200 people who had been granted TPVs or Temporary Humanitarian Visas.

“Years of casework from expert agencies indicate that the psychological harm created by the TPV system was substantial. Australia is still bearing the economic and social cost.

“While the number of asylum seekers who attempt to enter Australia remains very small (less than 0.5% of the global total), those involved are motivated by life-threatening conditions in their homelands and the lack of opportunity for genuine protection in South-East Asia.

“Exploring how Australia can help to improve protection for vulnerable groups of asylum seekers in Asia would be a more constructive focus for Mr Turnbull’s attention.”

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