



Refugee Council of Australia

December 9, 2008

The Editor
The West Australian
GPO Box D162
Perth WA 6840

Dear Editor,

Phillip Ruddock cannot sustain his claim (West Australian, December 9, page 1) that the Temporary Protection Visa policy he introduced reduced the number of asylum seekers arriving by boat. In the three years after the policy was introduced in October 1999, around 11,000 asylum seekers travelled to Australia by boat, more than at any other time in Australian history. There is evidence that the denial of the right to family reunion prompted members of separated families to take to the seas, some losing their lives in the process.

The temporary protection policy was originally Pauline Hanson's idea. When she raised the suggestion in 1998, Mr Ruddock described it in Parliament "as highly unconscionable in a way that most thinking people would clearly reject".

"Can you imagine what temporary entry would mean for them?" Mr Ruddock asked. "It would mean that people would never know whether they would be able to remain here. There would be uncertainty, particularly in terms of attention given to learning English, in addressing the torture and trauma so they heal from some of the tremendous physical and psychological wounds they have suffered."

Mr Ruddock was right in 1998.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Power
Chief Executive Officer