



Refugee Council
of Australia

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PROUST REPORT RELEASE A VALUABLE STEP IN DIALOGUE ABOUT ASYLUM CHANGES

The Immigration Minister's release of an independent report into the use of his ministerial intervention powers is a valuable step towards promoting public discussion about how Australia's asylum system can be improved, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) says.

The report, by businesswoman and former senior public servant Elizabeth Proust, was commissioned by Senator Chris Evans in December, shortly after he took office as Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. It makes six recommendations, nominating options for immediate improvements to the ministerial intervention process and for medium-term legislative change.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said that, while RCOA did not agree with all of Ms Proust's recommendations, the report made a strong case for change to existing approaches to processing visa applications and handling ministerial intervention requests.

"The Refugee Council agrees with Ms Proust and Senator Evans that serious shortcomings in existing procedures need to be addressed," Mr Power said. "The Minister would not be receiving thousands of requests for him to intervene if people felt that current arrangements were fair, consistent and timely.

"We are pleased that Senator Evans has used the release of the report to begin an open and constructive dialogue with the non-government sector about how change might occur and that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is examining how it can improve its management of individual applications to resolve long-running cases earlier.

"We are also pleased that both Ms Proust and Senator Evans have nominated the option of a complementary protection system as one of the measures which needs to be considered in reform of the current process.

"RCOA has been advocating for several years for Australia to adopt a complementary protection model to allow DIAC and the Refugee Review Tribunal to examine humanitarian protection needs not covered by the Refugee Convention as part of the protection visa application process. Such a system would provide additional safeguards for people who may be at risk of torture or persecution if returned to their country of origin.

"While legislative change is no doubt required, improvements to current procedures can do much to address community concerns about the current system. We will be working with our members to provide constructive feedback to DIAC and the Minister about how existing arrangements can be improved while continuing to advocate for legislative change."

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world