



Refugee Council of Australia

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BILL OFFERS GREATER PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Australia's lengthy, bureaucratic and arbitrary approach to protecting non-refugees from persecution and torture could be replaced with a fairer, faster and more transparent system if legislation before the Australian Parliament is passed, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) says.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Bill 2011 offers a much fairer solution for people who are not found to be refugees but are still at grave risk of persecution, torture or death on return to their country of origin.

“While Australia has signed a number of international treaties in which we have agreed to protect people who may face persecution or torture if returned home, our country has lacked an effective process for doing this if those at risk do not fit the Refugee Convention's formal definition of a refugee,” Mr Power said.

“Today decisions on the fate of such vulnerable people lie solely with the Immigration Minister who can look at the case only once a very lengthy system of applications, refusals and appeals is exhausted. Often, this process can take more than a year, even when the need to protect an individual from persecution is widely accepted.

“For the past 10 years, the Refugee Council and its member organisations have been campaigning for a better system. If this Bill is passed, it will transfer existing decision making powers to a formal administrative decision making model, allowing Australia to continue what it is already doing but in a much more efficient, cost-effective and lawful way.

“We call on all Parliamentarians to support this Bill, ensuring greater protection for the lives and rights of people at great risk.”

Media enquiries:

Sophie Peer

0488 035 535

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia
Phone: (02) 9211-9333 • Fax: (02) 9211-9288
info@refugeecouncil.org.au • Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.au
Incorporated in ACT • ABN 87 956 673 083

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