



Refugee Council
of Australia

5 September 2011

ACT TAKES LEAD ON ASYLUM SEEKER SUPPORT

The Refugee Council of Australia today congratulated the ACT Government on its ground-breaking Services Access Card, which will provide asylum seekers with better access to government services.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the ACT Services Access Card will make it easier for asylum seekers to use government services and programs they were entitled to.

“For asylum seekers, adjusting to a new life in Australia is an incredibly stressful experience,” Mr Power said.

“Something as simple as not being able to understand your rights to access government services can lock many asylum seekers out of education opportunities, transport services and health care,” he said.

“Through the Services Access Card, the ACT Government has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of life for asylum seekers,” Mr Power said.

“To its credit, the ACT Government listened to community concerns about the barriers asylum seekers faced in accessing essential services and has taken action to improve the system,” he said.

“The ACT Services Access Card sets a great example in how to make asylum seekers welcome. The Refugee Council of Australia encourages other States and Territories to follow the ACT Government’s lead,” Mr Power said.

The ACT Services Access Card was developed with a number of stakeholders including the ACT Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Coordination Committee.

Mr Power congratulated the Committee, which includes Migrant and Refuge Resettlement Services, Multicultural Youth Services and Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, Companion House, CatholicCare, Canberra Refugee Support, St John’s Kippax, Independent Council for Refugee Advocacy, Australian Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Centrelink, Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, the ACT Policing Multicultural Liaison Officer and St Vincent de Paul.

The card is expected to be in operation later this year. The ACT Government will also launch an information campaign to promote awareness of the card among service providers.

A website – www.dhcs.act.gov.au/multicultural/access_card - will detail the services available to cardholders.

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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