



## Refugee Council of Australia

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### **MIGRATION CHANGES A POSITIVE START**

The Refugee Council of Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's migration policy changes to process asylum seekers arriving by boat.

RCOA board member Sonia Caton said the move to expand community-based support for asylum seekers was a positive step and an opportunity to make onshore processing a success.

"This is welcome news for asylum seekers and those people in the community who advocate more humane approaches to processing the claims of asylum seekers. Importantly it brings Australia's approach into line with its international obligations under the Refugee Convention.

"The changes mean asylum seekers arriving by boat will be dealt with under the similar processes of security, identity and health checks that apply to asylum seekers arriving by plane."

Ms Caton said the RCOA reiterated its position that immigration detention should only be used as a risk management process to check the health, security and identity status of asylum seekers who arrived without visas.

"Indefinite mandatory detention is seriously damaging the mental health of asylum seekers at an escalating rate.

"The continued expansion of community-based alternatives is a crucial step towards addressing the enormous human and financial costs of indefinite mandatory detention."

Ms Caton also said the move to community-based solutions would send a positive signal to Australia's neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region.

"By modelling best-practice refugee protection policies in Australia, we are showing leadership and encouraging other countries in the region to adopt lawful and humane approaches to protecting asylum seekers and refugees."

Ms Caton urged the Federal Government to continue investing in regional cooperation to bolster protection for refugees and asylum seekers in South-East Asia and South Asia.

"The Bali process is now beginning to focus on the causes of the movement of asylum seekers and refugees in the Asia-Pacific region. Building an effective regional refugee protection framework is a key long-term strategy to address this movement of people in our region."

Ms Caton said she hoped the changes would signal a return to moral policies in the treatment of asylum seekers and an end to the negative political rhetoric.

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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