



Refugee Council
of Australia



REFUGEE COUNCIL BULLETIN

16 February 2016

For nearly two weeks now, the #LetThemStay campaign has shifted the focus of the refugee debate on to the detrimental impacts of Australia's indefinite offshore detention policy. Churches, community groups, doctors, nurses, teachers, principals and many thousands of people across Australia have taken action, even taking to the streets, to demand a shift in Australia's approach.

Thank you to all of you who have added your support. Over the next two weeks, the campaign is switching to the local electorate as politicians go home on a parliamentary break. There's a lot happening, so please do get involved.

Academics and policy makers across Australia have been utilising our policy paper [Australia's Response to Regional Protection](#) to frame the debate about Australia's response to refugees in a way which respects basic rights. A common hope is that Australia can regain credibility in the international sphere by beginning to treat people seeking asylum with dignity and respect and work towards more sustainable answers for displaced people.

REFUGEE COUNCIL NEWS

[Leaked immigration proposal 'self-defeating' and risks fomenting exclusion](#)

February 5, 2016: Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) notes that, while Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Australia Day praised our nation as the world's most successful multicultural society, the tightening of access to citizenship for refugees and migrants, as proposed in a leaked Immigration Department submission to Federal Cabinet, would undermine Australia's success as a multicultural nation.

[Moral question of offshore detention remains for Government](#)

February 3, 2016: While the High Court found that Australia's detention camp on Nauru was saved by last-minute retrospective legislation, the moral questions remain for the Government, RCOA says. "The High Court finding today does not compel the Government to send these innocent and vulnerable people, including 33 babies born here in this country, to this isolated detention camp in the middle of the Pacific," CEO Paul Power said.

[Eleven Australians celebrated for their contribution to refugees and asylum seekers](#)

26 January, 2016: Eleven Australians have been honoured for their service to refugees and asylum seekers in the 2016 Australia Day Honours List. RCOA CEO Paul Power said that those honoured were acknowledged for their support of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in detention and the community, through community work, youth programs, the arts, philanthropy, education and public advocacy.

REPORTS AND SUBMISSIONS

UNHCR hosts global dialogue on root causes of displacement

On 16-17 December, the retiring UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, hosted the last of his annual dialogues on protection challenges, focusing on the topic “Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement”. This was the first gathering of its kind to bring together states, UN bodies and civil society representatives to discuss the factors which cause displacement. Involving representatives of 86 states, 25 international bodies, 53 experts and 64 NGOs, the dialogue explored the root causes of displacement caused by conflict, persecution, urbanisation and environmental factors. It also examined the drivers of onward movement and responses to protracted displacement. RCOA CEO Paul Power, one of the NGO delegates invited to the global dialogue, has produced a summary of the dialogue discussions available [here](#).

RCOA raises concerns about family tax and social security changes

The Refugee Council of Australia made [a submission](#) on the [Social Services Legislation Amendment \(Family Measures\) Bill 2015](#) in February 2015. The Bill reduces the time for which an individual can be eligible for family tax benefit while temporarily absent from Australia, to six weeks and ends the large family supplement, which provides assistance to families upon the birth of the fourth and subsequent FTB children in the family. The Refugee Council expressed concerns that these changes will adversely affect refugee communities travelling overseas to visit and/or care for relatives, and families of refugee backgrounds with large families.

The Refugee Council of Australia also made a submission on the [Social Services Legislation Amendment \(Budget Repair\) Bill 2015](#) in January 2016. The Refugee Council expressed concerns that these changes will adversely affect refugee communities travelling overseas to visit and/or care for relatives, and families of refugee backgrounds with large families. The Refugee Council also stated its opposition against the removal of the Pensioner Education Supplement (PES) and Education Entry Payment (EdEP), which assists people in covering part of the upfront and ongoing cost of education. Finally, the Refugee Council is against the indexation freeze on income-free areas, since it believes that this measure is counterproductive, as it will discourage people from seeking employment.

CALL FOR ASSISTANCE

Invitation for submissions to UNHCR-NGO Consultations

RCOA is seeking feedback from individuals and refugee community groups on current issues of concern for people living in refugee situations overseas, which RCOA should consider raising with UNHCR at the consultations. We are particularly interested in hearing about issues of [corruption, fraud and exploitation in the resettlement process](#). For information on how to raise issues for RCOA to take to the UNHCR-NGO Consultations in June, please use the [‘Invitation for Submissions’ document](#)

For a report on issues that were raised last year by communities in Australia through this process, please go to: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2015_UNHCR_NGO-Report.pdf
Submissions are due by 6 April 2016.

Call for asylum seekers affected by education access

RCOA is working with partners to promote access to education, particularly tertiary education, for people seeking asylum and those on temporary visas. If you would like to offer your story of education access, or lack of access, please contact media@refugeecouncil.org.au

EVENTS

Feb 17 18 The Integration Conference

Monash University, Melbourne, VIC Australia

This conference is organised by Africa Media Australia in partnership with the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' council (NEMBC). The overall theme of the conference is "Media representations of ethnic communities and their impacts on integration and social mobility" [Find out more](#)

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Feb 18 6- 8pm ALHR Refugee Policy Q & A event

La Trobe University City Campus, Level 20, 360 Collins St Melbourne

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights hosts Anna Burke MP and Sen. Sarah Hanson-Young as they discuss their parties' refugee policies and plans. Joining them in discussion will be legal community stakeholders and experts in refugee law: Julian Burnside AO QC (Vic Bar), David Manne (Refugee Legal) and Dr Savitri Taylor (La Trobe University) [Find out more](#) »

Feb 21 11:00 am - 1:00 pm AMA Forum: The Health Care of Asylum Seekers and the Harms caused by Immigration Detention, especially for Children

Ionic Room, SMC Conference and Function Centre, 66 Goulburn St Sydney

[Find out more >>](#)

March 2 Red Cross National Practitioners' Forum

Rydges Hotel, 701 Swanston St Melbourne

This event will bring together experts and practitioners to explore impacts of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and consider how we can shape the conversation regarding social cohesion and diversity. Registrations close Friday 26 February.

[Find out more>>](#)

MEDIA YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

National

[#LetThemStay: Nationwide moves to challenge offshore detention](#) SBS

['Don't send them back' message to Turnbull](#) SMH

[Government to stand strong on deportations to Nauru](#) ABC

[Darebin Council proposes housing for refugees above Northcote car park](#) Herald Sun

[Refugees fear immigration double-dip assessment](#) SBS TV

[Refugee Bodies Prepare For 2016 Intake](#) Huffington Post Australia

[Chance to escape 'torture camps' turned down](#) Newstalk ZB

[Asylum seekers support services are under pressure across the country](#) ABC PM

[Moves to limit overseas travel for pensioners 'discriminatory' say migrant, refugee groups](#) SMH

[Human rights report urges Turnbull government to rethink asylum policies](#)

[Australia may crack down on Syrian refugees: leaked document](#) Reuters

[Refugee Advocates Slam Tougher Migration Proposals](#) - Huffington Post Australia

[Fringe Festival raises money for Refugee Council](#) Canberra Times

[Aussie court dismisses challenge to offshore refugee detention](#) The Nation

[Australian court dismisses challenge to offshore refugee detention](#) gulfnews.com

[Court upholds Australian asylum policy](#) The Herald Sun “

[Complementary protection changes akin to using 'hammer to crack a lentil'](#) SMH

[Refugee Welcome Zone push for Sunshine Coast](#) The Sunshine Coast Daily

[Australia may crack down on Syrian refugees](#) (The News International)

[Asylum seekers not raped on Nauru immigration official says](#) ABC

Asia-Pacific

[Manus asylum seekers given controversial anti-malaria drug](#) Guardian

[Trapped for years after failing to reach Australia](#) Straits Times

International

[Why nearly 10% of Eritrea's population has fled](#) Wall Street Journal

[80,000 refugees arrive in Europe in first 6 weeks of 2016 – 400 die on the way](#).UNHCR

[Thousands of Iraqi asylum seekers voluntarily leave Finland](#) Reuters

[Why warships can't solve the refugee crisis](#) IRIN

[Turkey hosting ten times more refugees than Europe](#) IRIN

Opinion

[Citizenship revamp a threat to most basic Australian values](#) The Age

[Offshore detention: possibly legal, definitely immoral](#) New Daily

[Pezzullo's job to hear moral lecturing](#) SMH

[Cause To Hope: How To Break Australia's Indifference To The Way We Treat Asylum Seekers](#) Junkee



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An independent national network of more than 200 organisational members and thousands of individual supporters, the Refugee Council of Australia promotes fair treatment of people fleeing persecution and celebrates the contributions of Australians who have been refugees. Our work is funded by people who share our vision. To support us, visit <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/get-involved/make-a-donation/>