



27 July 2013

Cruelty has no place in refugee protection

We've heard so much from the major political parties about smashing the people smugglers' business model.

But the policies they are taking to the election will only smash the hopes of highly vulnerable people seeking protection from persecution.

The Government's agreement with Papua New Guinea denies asylum seekers travelling by boat any chance of resettling in Australia.

The Opposition's answer is a military operation to repel asylum seekers from seeking refugee protection in Australia.

Both policy positions are inhumane and lack fairness or decency. They are likely to punish people who have no safe pathway to protection, no so-called orderly process to access.

Refugees and asylum seekers in these desperate circumstances have little option but to risk their lives on the seas.

Having escaped the persecution, they will be further punished – just for asking a Refugee Convention signatory for protection.

If our political leaders are serious about taking away the people-smuggler's business model, they need to be in the business of constructive diplomacy and cooperation – working with other governments in the region to give asylum seekers prompt and safe access to a fair asylum process closer to their country of origin.

It's time to ditch the toxic politics and implement the policies that bolster refugee protection in countries in Asia where asylum seekers lack legal status, the right to work, access to quality health and education and are at risk of arrest, arbitrary detention and abuse.

Australians expect leadership from the major parties, not the unedifying spectacle of bullying the vulnerable.

How you can help

- Contact endorsed political candidates for the 2013 election from all parties

- Let them know you will support policies that are consistent with Australia's reputation of fairness, decency and respect for human rights conventions we have signed up to
- Write letters to the editor outlining your concerns about the direction of asylum policy

Essential reading

ROCA statement on Australia-PNG agreement

http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130723_PNG.pdf

ROCA statement on Operation Sovereign Borders

http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130727_SovereignBorders.pdf

UNHCR criticisms on the Australia-PNG agreement

<http://bit.ly/16fZjUt>

Salvation Army staff on conditions endured by asylum seekers on Nauru

<http://newmatilda.com//2013/07/24/nauru-staff-condemn-cruel-conditions>

Arguments to counter claims deterrence policies are about saving lives

<http://bit.ly/12hbzHr>

Why the Australia-PNG arrangement is not regional cooperation

<http://bit.ly/13Jqmst>

Where Australia ranks in refugee protection

http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/130719_GlobalStats.pdf

How to contact candidates

Australian Labor Party

<http://www.alp.org.au/candidates>

Liberal-National Coalition

<http://www.liberal.org.au/abbott-team/>

The Greens

<http://thegreens.org.au/>

The ABC election guide also lists candidates and electorate profiles

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/federal-election-2013/guide/nameindex/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/federal-election-2013/guide/candindex/>

Feedback is encouraged

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