



A Just Australia

25 November 2011

Community processing is becoming a reality – let's make it work

The Government is moving to adopt the changes to refugee and asylum seeker policy that we've been pushing for years.

Asylum seekers, including those arriving by boat, will be issued with bridging visas to live in the community while their claims for asylum are assessed.

However, the Malaysia deal is still government policy and the excision legislation remains in place.

We need all the help we can get to make this new community-based policy work – we've worked too hard to let it fall victim to political division and media hysteria.

Community processing will work with strong political leadership in every community.

Last month, RCOA was part of a 16-member [delegation](#) of community and faith organisations that met with Federal parliamentarians in Canberra.

The delegation emphasised its support for community-based processing and alternatives to detention and urged MPs to lead by example and promote positive community-centred policies.

Now we need your support to get your local Member for Parliament behind the new arrangements.

We need to make it clear that the Malaysia deal and offshore processing will not address the reasons why people make the dangerous boat journey to Australia – that is a lack of protection for refugees and asylum seekers in our region.

How you can help

Contact your local MP and tell them that onshore and community processing:

- has the support of most Australians according to opinion polling
- is a cheaper and more humane alternative to mandatory detention
- is a proven model in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA
- will work given the enormous capacity that exists in our communities
- has to be implemented quickly to free people from long-term detention

However, concerns remain over Australia's asylum policy and we must let MPs know that:

- the refugee swap agreement with Malaysia is still government policy and doesn't address the real issue – the lack of protection in our region
- the excision legislation remains in place which leaves the door open to the resumption of offshore processing

How to contact your local MP

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/index.htm>

<http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/senators/index.htm>

<http://www.ajustaustralia.com/action/mps.php>

Essential reading

RCOA's reaction to the Federal Government's announcement:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/news/releases/111125_community_processing.pdf

The Minister for Immigration's media release outlines the new arrangements

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb180599.htm>

The Working for a better way delegation to Canberra distributed a briefing paper, outlining the sector's policy position.

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/statements/111031_Community_delegation.pdf

Further reading

RCOA recently made a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network.

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/submissions/1108_JSC_Detention_sub.pdf

A Herald-Neilsen poll found a majority of Australian voters were in favour of onshore processing of asylum seekers.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/gillard-out-of-step-with-most-voters-20110911-1k479.html>

The International Detention Coalition has studied the benefits of community-based processing in other countries.

<http://idcoalition.org/cap/>

RCOA's submission to the Legal Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into Australia's Agreement with Malaysia in Relation to Asylum Seekers explains why the deal is bad policy.

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/submissions/1109_Malaysia_sub.pdf

Feedback is encouraged

Please share any responses you receive through your advocacy work. Send any feedback to media@refugeecouncil.org.au