



A Just Australia

A campaign for the humane treatment of asylum seekers: managed by the Refugee Council of Australia

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Campaign e-bulletin : December 2010

This is a short bulletin to wish you all a happy holiday season and to thank YOU. Thank you for your continued support of AJA and the campaign to secure fair treatment for asylum seekers and refugees to Australia. We have had a very mixed year, some wins to celebrate and some incredible lows we had hoped not to see again in Australia – and, of course, the tragedy on Christmas Island just last week. Our website includes a look at the bigger issues of 2010 in our sector. <http://bit.ly/h4zmFN>

No doubt you are well into end-of-year celebrations. If at those barbecues and parties you hear comments like "not another boat", "I don't want a detention centre near me" or "they should wait in queues", here are some ideas <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/info/mythsfacts.php> for combating these statements. Often people just haven't thought it through, being swayed by politicians and media outlets who promote a sense of fear. A friendly, rational chat can make all the difference. Let us know how you get on, through mail@ajustaustralia.com. We would love the feedback so that next year we can better equip you and all refugee advocates to tackle these sometimes tricky conversations.

Real people, real stories

Five inspiring people have shared their stories of asylum with Amnesty International Australia <http://bit.ly/e9iqBo>. Retelling stories such as these may just help you explain the issues and realities to those not quite so supportive of refugees and asylum seekers! Or here is a collection of three stories from three former refugees who arrived to Australia at very different times as told to ABC's *Hungry Beast* show last year. <http://bit.ly/i1Hjp9b>

Christmas Island tragedy

In response to calls from the media, we issued a statement last week about the terrible tragedy on Christmas Island. <http://bit.ly/hPz6Nu> Details are still coming to light and it could be days or weeks before we have the full picture. What we do know is that desperate people have suffered enormously in this incident and Australia must show compassion to them and create policy change to prevent this happening again. It is very sad that on the airwaves, blogs and online commentary there are people saying those on board were "queue jumpers", "that they knew the risks", "that the incident is the result of 'soft' policy by the government" and more. **It is vital that you add your voice** to this national discussion and inject some fact, humanity and rational debate to the issues. Call your talkback radio stations, check online commentary on news pieces, write to editors. Be a part of the voice for change.

The year ahead... 2011 is already shaping up to be a year of challenges. We will be in touch in February with lots of ideas and ways for you to be involved in ensuring that we see some positive change to the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Australia. There will be info on how you can take part in Refugee Week 2011, ideas for celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Refugee Convention and campaigning tools for us all to create change. I look forward to working with you in the new year.

And; be a friend. **Refugee Council of Australia is on Facebook** – sharing latest news, events, music and other ideas and thoughts we think may interest you.

FOR NOW, HERE ARE SOME SHOPPING IDEAS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

2011 Global Backyard calendar. This is more than a calendar, each month you can tear out a postcard and a bookmark, and read the personal stories of people in your own backyard who have found safety in Sydney. <http://www.globalbackyard.com.au/calendar.html> Global Backyard matches volunteer mentors with people who arrived to Australia as refugees to foster and support their artistic, academic and professional goals.

The Key of Sea

The Key of Sea is an album that brings together musicians who entered Australia as refugees with acclaimed Australian artists such as Sarah Blasko, Tim Rogers, Katie Noonan, the Cat Empire and the Vasco Era. All proceeds from the sale of the album will go to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Human Rights Arts and Film Festival and Refugees Survivors and Ex detainees (RISE). Get a copy at www.thekeyofsea.com.au

Christmas cards and t-shirts available from Sanctuary Refugee Foundation

Buy PEACE Christmas cards and t-shirts to support the travel loan fund that helps families reunite. All profits raised will be used to provide interest-free airfare loans for unfunded Humanitarian entrants. www.sanctuaryaustraliafoundation.org.au/shop

The ongoing vital work of AJA and the Refugee Council of Australia is reliant largely on your generosity – should you wish to make a contribution;
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getinvolved/donate.html> or contact us on 02 9211 9333.