



A Just Australia

AJA June e-bulletin

I hope you have had a successful Refugee Week full of celebration and sharing. A few of the nearly 200 events are still to come, check www.refugeeweek.org.au. A huge thank you to everyone who has taken part, volunteered and celebrated - the week is a success thanks to all of you. A huge thanks also to the terrific response we have seen to this years' tax time appeal. [It's not too late](#), you can still donate.

Our Sydney and Melbourne Refugee Week launches were terrific former refugees **Majak Daw, Gracia Ngoy, Najeeba Wazefadost and Carina Hoang** shared their own experiences of finding freedom from fear. Thanks also to Sydney emcee, Yalda Hakim (SBS *Dateline*). Some pics on RCOA [facebook](#) and more to come...

TO DO: send us links, images, info about your local event; media@refugeecouncil.org.au

We issued two statements for Refugee Week 2011; the first [celebrating](#) the week and the contribution made by over 750,000 refugees settled in Australia. [The second](#), endorsed by a number of NGOs reminds us that amidst the celebrations around 5,500 people are locked away in Australia's immigration detention centres. We hope the clear requests in this statement give you tools for arguing the case, talking to friends, local media, blogging, tweeting and generally calling for a more sane and more humane policy approach.

TO DO: take the [dot points from the statement](#) and let your MP know about the changes you want to see to detention policy in this country.

Malaysia "deal"

RCOA has paid its objection to the proposed deal between Australia and Malaysia well known. Following a refugee conference last week at UNSW, a [joint statement condemning the deal](#) was also made. We believe:

- Australia can and should be assessing the claims of all those who arrive here seeking protection.
- Australia should be burden sharing, not burden shifting. Sending asylum seekers from a convention signatory country to a non-signatory sets a very dangerous precedent.
- We know the dire conditions that face asylum seekers in Malaysia and to date there has been no information regarding how the safety of these 800 people could be ensured.

TO DO: write to your MP, Minister Bowen, PM Gillard, call talk back radio. This deal does not have to go ahead.

Looking to the future, learning from the past. A conference to mark 60 years of the Refugee Convention. It was great to see so many of you at the conference in Sydney last week. The line up of speakers was truly incredible, NGO workers from the Thai - Burma border, Malaysia and India. Academics from across Australia and the region and former refugees now settled in all parts of Australia. A Youth Forum and Women's dialogue provided unique insights. Contributions were rich and challenging, recommendations and papers will be up shortly www.crr.unsw.edu.au (Be patient, the team is presently in Geneva at UNHCR meetings!)

RCOA in Canberra

We have been busy making submissions, giving evidence and attending roundtables.

- [Migration Amendment \(Strengthening the Character Test and Other Provisions\) Bill 2011 \[Provisions\]](#) A reactionary response to Christmas Island and Villawood incidents which could see refugees denied permanent protection and family reunion for something as minor as breaking a rubbish bin.
- [Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Amendment Bill 2011 \[Provisions\]](#) Relevant to our work, looking at ASIO's role in the issue of long term detention.
- [Migration Amendment \(Detention Reform and Procedural Fairness\) Bill 2010](#) looking to put in place limits on time in detention, reviews and assess issues of fairness and dignity in detention. Look out for our submission, uploaded soon.

Go Back to Where You Came From

The SBS series is old news now (finished last night!), but if you missed it, it's online. RCOA provided background information for the show and its' related materials. In particular we are very proud of the co-produced secondary schools resource developed for Refugee Week (but applicable all year round). The pack was sent to every secondary school in the country, and is also available for free download. http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/RW_Schools_Pack.pdf

TO DO: secondary students, ask for this lesson to be taught. Parents, teachers, friends, anyone who has walked past a secondary school - check if the resource is being used, if not - why not?
Have a look at www.sbs.com.au/goback there is a quiz, info, excerpts, loads of chat and an online game.

Other interesting info:

The Australian Press Council has again ruled that the press, in this case Greg Sheridan of The Australian, should not refer to asylum seekers as "illegal".

<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/pcsite/adj/1498.html>

UNHCR has just released their [2010 stats on asylum](#). Guess what, Australia is not being inundated with applications! Last year we received around 1% of the world's asylum claims. The developing world continues to host the vast majority of refugee and asylum seekers.

ChilOut has just released their report into children detained on Christmas Island.

<http://www.chilout.org/?news&nid=26>

End of financial year is days away... there's still time to make your tax deductible donation to the work of AJA and RCOA. Call 02 9211 9333 or [use this form](#).

