



Refugee Council of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

20 May 2014

Welcome to the latest bulletin from the Refugee Council of Australia. We welcome feedback, ideas or information worth sharing. Please contact us at admin@refugeecouncil.org.au.

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

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NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Detention and status resolution to cost \$2.96 billion in 2014-15

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection will spend \$2.96 billion on onshore detention-related services, community release, status resolution and offshore asylum seeker management in 2014-15, the Australian Government's Budget papers reveal. RCOA's summary of the 2014-15 Federal Budget highlights other spending including \$142.8 million for settlement services and \$957.9 million for border enforcement, noting a \$7.6 billion reduction in aid spending over five years starting in 2013-14. The Refugee and Humanitarian Program will continue to provide 13,750 permanent places, reduced from 20,000 in 2012-13 but remaining the same as the revised 2013-14 program allocation. RCOA's Budget summary is at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/bud/2014-15-Budget.pdf>

Concerns for safety of refugees in proposed Cambodia resettlement deal

RCOA raised serious concerns about the safety of any refugees liable to be sent to Cambodia under a resettlement deal being considered by the Australian Government. In a statement, RCOA CEO Paul Power said any deal by Australia to send recognised refugees from Nauru to Cambodia would ignore significant human rights concerns in a country that has a history of forcibly returning refugees to persecution. Despite being one of the few countries in the Asia-Pacific region to sign the Refugee Convention, Cambodia was responsible for some of the most blatant breaches of the Convention in Asia, the statement said. Mr Power said any deal to resettle refugees in Cambodia would be another shameful example of Australia abusing its privilege and influence within the Asia-Pacific region at a time when it should be at the forefront of measures to lead a regional movement towards a more effective sharing of responsibility for the protection of refugees. "Forcing refugees, unwanted by Australia, on to some of the poorest nations in the Asia-Pacific region is not only deeply cynical but undermines any long-term efforts to build the trust required between nations to develop a fairer sharing of responsibility," the statement said. Read the media release at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140430_Cambodia.pdf

New RCOA paper highlights the strengths within refugee communities

A new RCOA paper on the role of refugee community organisations in the settlement of new arrivals highlights the extent of the contribution these community organisations make. Titled "The Strength Within", the 14-page paper casts light on the often unnoticed and overwhelmingly voluntary work conducted by refugee community organisations in fostering social participation, economic and personal wellbeing, independence, life satisfaction and community connections. The paper profiles the work of five community organisations and canvasses the collective challenges such organisations face. "The Strength Within" can be found at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/1405_StrengthWithin.pdf

Former refugee from Iraq to take community concerns to Geneva

A former refugee from Iraq who is now a team leader in refugee settlement services in Melbourne has been chosen by RCOA to help bring the concerns of refugee communities in Australia to next month's international meeting with representatives of the world's NGOs. Nuha Markus, who has worked with Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre for the past five years, will be the second annual recipient of the John Gibson Refugee Community Leadership Grant, receiving assistance to travel to and participate in UNHCR's NGO Consultations in Geneva. The theme of the 2014 consultations is "Women's Leadership

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The Refugee Council of Australia represents
non-government organisations and
individuals working with and for refugees
in Australia and around the world

and Participation". Nuha was chosen from a very strong field of applicants for the grant, which was named last year in honour of the late John Gibson, RCOA president from 2006 to 2012. This year's grant is offered by RCOA with financial support from Settlement Services International, Australian Council for International Development and Amnesty International Australia. Nuha will have the opportunity to raise community concerns not only in the formal sessions of the three-day NGO Consultations but also in a series of meetings RCOA has arranged with senior managers of UNHCR in Geneva. RCOA works closely with the Centre for Refugee Research in planning the joint advocacy efforts of the Australian delegates and in providing support to refugee representatives supported by different organisations, including the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women. These advocacy efforts are informed by consultation processes conducted by RCOA and the Centre for Refugee Research in the months prior to the June meetings.

Indonesian Foreign Minister's comments on refugee protection welcomed

A plea by Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to share responsibility for the protection of refugees was welcomed by RCOA. Mr Natalegawa's plea, made at an international conference in Jakarta on irregular movement by sea, acknowledged the human rights of asylum seekers "no matter their legal status" and called for assistance to people smuggled across borders "simply because they are fellow human beings". In a statement, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said Mr Natalegawa's comments showed a quality of political leadership missing for some years from regional discussions about asylum. The statement noted that in Australia, the political debate was focused on whether or not people had prior permission from governments to cross borders despite the fact that the great majority of the world's refugees have little choice but to cross borders without permission to reach places of safety. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140422_IndonRegional.pdf

Detention centre closures spark call for more community alternatives

The planned closure of six detention centres in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Christmas Island was welcomed by RCOA but the Australian Government was urged to make greater use of community arrangements for more than 3000 asylum seekers now in long-term detention. In a statement, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the Government needed to do more to reduce the increasing rate of long-term detention, noting that between 30 September 2013 and 31 March 2014, the number of people detained for six months or more increased nearly six-fold from 621 to 3618. Of these, more than 3000 arrived by boat to seek asylum. Read the statement at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140508_DetentionCentres.pdf

Refugee Week 2014 just four weeks away

RCOA is encouraging organisations around Australia to organise events for Refugee Week 2014, which will be celebrated between Sunday 15 June and Saturday 21 June. The theme, "Restoring Hope", reminds us that, while a refugee's journey begins with danger, it also begins with hope. The Sydney launch of Refugee Week will be held on Saturday, 14 June at Granville Town Hall between 10.30am and 12.30pm. A launch will also be held in Ballarat in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth and the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council with further details to be announced soon. Details for a launch in Adelaide will also be finalised soon. Organisations holding events during Refugee Week are encouraged to register them on our Refugee Week website. Registration forms are available here: <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/events/register.php>. To find out what events are happening in your area visit <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/events/calendar.php>. This year's Refugee Week poster features Hany, 20, and his three-year-old brother Ashraf enjoying a happy moment in the bleak surroundings of a camp for Syrian refugees in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Copies of the poster can be ordered at <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/resources/poster.php>. The 2014 Refugee Week ambassador profiles are also on-line at <http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/ambassadors.php>. We also thank this year's sponsors of Refugee Week. Refugee Week is proudly sponsored in 2014 by Victorian Multicultural Commission (Principal Sponsor), Settlement Services International (Principal Sponsor), Navitas (Major Sponsor), NSW Teachers' Federation, AMES, The Network of Caring and NSW AMES.

Refugee concerns raised in Racial Discrimination Act submission

RCOA's submission to Australia's Attorney-General on proposed amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act have raised fears expressed by Australians of refugee background of increased racism and abuse. The submission argued that the proposed amendments would weaken protection

against racism, racial vilification and discrimination towards refugee communities. Informed by consultations RCOA held with Australians of refugee background who shared many experiences of racism at work, in public places, on public transport and in social activities such as sporting clubs, the submission noted that many people were afraid to go out in public and had suffered verbal abuse which had caused some to withdraw from sporting clubs and social activities. The consultations also conveyed the thoughts of many refugee community members who noted that the negative and inflammatory rhetoric perpetuated by some politicians and public figures has had a negative impact on people settling in Australia as well as fuelling a misunderstanding in the Australian population about who refugees are and why they come to Australia. Read the media release at http://refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140501_RDA.pdf and the full submission at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1404-RDA.pdf>

Submission on housing affordability for refugees and asylum seekers

Increasing housing stock, financial support and extending work rights to asylum seekers were recommended in RCOA's submission to the Senate Economic References Committee as possible strategies to make housing more affordable for refugees and asylum seekers. The submission was based on consultations held with refugees and asylum seekers, which will form part of a soon-to-be-released national research project. Read the submission at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1403-Housing.pdf>

Submission on experiences of refugees studying at TAFE

The Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment Inquiry into Technical and Further Education in Australia provided an opportunity for RCOA to raise concerns expressed by refugee communities on their experiences in vocational education. RCOA's submission, based on consultations and research, explained how the competitive training market had resulted in lower quality support to some refugee and humanitarian entrants in TAFEs and argued for better regulation and monitoring of the quality of vocational education and training (VET) provides. Read the submission at <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/r/sub/1402-TAFE.pdf>

Former refugees available to speak at Sydney and Melbourne schools

RCOA is continuing its program to increase awareness in schools of the experiences and contributions of former refugees on a fee-for-service basis in the Greater Sydney and Melbourne areas, following a successful pilot. Under the pilot, supported by the Australian Government's Diversity and Social Cohesion Program, presentations were delivered in schools in Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne, as well as to trainee teachers at Sydney University. Schools can express interest in being part of the program by contacting Eileen Wahab at RCOA's Sydney office on (02) 9211 9333 or by email to projects@refugeecouncil.org.au

Bright Ideas profiles the Afghan Men's Exercise Group

The latest profile in our Bright Ideas series, profiles the Afghan Men's Exercise Group, an initiative of Shepparton community mental health centre Primary Care Connect. The group attracts up to 20 refugees and asylum seekers each week, with most living in the community on bridging visas. A recent review of the program found participants felt more connected to the local community while some challenges remained around public transport access and encouraging extremely vulnerable men to attend on a regular basis. Find out more about the Afghan Men's Exercise Group and other Bright Ideas at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/brightideas.php>

Leeton Shire becomes Australia's 91st Refugee Welcome Zone

The Refugee Welcome Zone initiative celebrated its 91st member with Leeton Shire Council, in NSW's Riverina voting to express a commitment in spirit to welcome refugees into the community. To find out more about the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative, visit: <http://refugeecouncil.org.au/g/rwz.php>

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

The best way to keep up with RCOA is through Facebook and Twitter. We regularly publish links to new RCOA statements and research and to interesting articles in the media on refugee issues. Our Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/pages/Refugee-Council-of-Australia-RCOA/157472830949702. Our Twitter feed is @OzRefugeeCounc.

COMING EVENTS

Art Is Our Voice" exhibition

Wednesday 14 to Thursday 22 May, Darlington NSW

"Art Is Our Voice" is an exhibition showcasing the creative work of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. It includes works by 15 visual artists from Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Sri Lanka, most of whom have worked professionally in their countries of origin in a range of media including painting, sculpting and photography, and as jewellers and engravers. The exhibition has been organised by Amnesty International and Settlement Services International.

Details: opening night 14 May 6:00pm then daily 10:00am-5:00pm; Verge Gallery, Jane Foss Russell Plaza, City Road, Darlington; to RSVP for opening night, email events_RSVP@ssi.org.au (include any dietary requirements); for further information, call (02) 8799 6700.

Fundraiser to support long-term detainees

Saturday 24 May, Brunswick VIC

This fundraiser will support the 31 men who have been found to be refugees but who remain in indefinite detention at the Broadmeadows detention facility due to having received a negative security assessment from ASIO. They have been detained for several years, leaving their families in desperate financial situations. Funds raised will go directly to these men for their families to provide the essentials such as food rent and clothing.

Details: tickets \$50.00 or \$100.00 (includes a two-course dinner with vegetarian and vegan options available); 6:15pm to 11:00pm (dinner served at 7:00pm); Brunswick Uniting Church Hall, 212 Sydney Road (cnr Merri Street), Brunswick; for further details and to book tickets, visit <http://www.trybooking.com/84991>.

Seminar: When freedom of religion clashes with human rights

Monday 26 May, Kensington NSW

This seminar will be delivered by Professor Karima Bennouna, professor of international and human rights law at the University of California. When her father faced death threats during the 1990s in his home country of Algeria for being outspoken against fundamentalism and terrorism, Professor Bennouna began to collect the untold stories of the thousands of Muslims engaged in his struggle against religious extremism and oppression. Travelling from Afghanistan to Mali, she interviewed nearly 300 people in close to 30 Muslim-majority countries. Her recent book, *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here*, tells their story and was chosen by the American Library Association's Booklist as one of the best books of 2013.

Details: 12:30pm-2:00pm; Staff Common Room, Level 2, Law Building, University of New South Wales Kensington campus; to RSVP, go to <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/when-freedom-of-religion-clashes-with-human-rights-registration-11444626185>.

International Theological Conference: Interfaith Dialogue

Monday 26 to Thursday 29 May, Melbourne VIC

Hosted by the Australian Catholic University, this conference will explore the advances and setbacks of the last five decades and to investigate new paths that can contribute to the wellbeing of humanity and the cosmos. The theme of the conference is 'Paths to Dialogue in our Age'.

Details: Australian Catholic University, Melbourne; for further details and to register, visit <http://www.acu.edu.au/581641>.

"Tree of Life" theatre performances

Monday 26 May and Monday 2 June, Kirribilli NSW

Witness the true life stories of young refugees from Iraq and Somalia who attend Miller Technology High School and Intensive English Centre.

Details: tickets \$35.00 (concession \$20.00, school groups \$10.00 per student); Ensemble Theatre, 78 McDougall Street, Kirribilli; to book tickets, call (02) 9926 0644.

Inside Manus: Briefing on PNG National Court inquiry into Australia's detention centre

Tuesday 27 May, Sydney NSW

Amnesty International's Kate Schuetze and the Human Rights Law Centre's Daniel Webb recently returned from Manus Island, Papua New Guinea where they were participating in the PNG National

Court case assessing the lawfulness of the Manus Island detention centre. This panel discussion, which will feature Kate and Daniel along with Ben Kiely (Senior Associate, King & Wood Mallesons) and Eoin Blackwell (journalist and former AAP correspondent to PNG), will focus on conditions inside the Manus Island detention centre, the recent violence, the importance, the power of the Court's inquiry, the many pitfalls of Australia's asylum seeker policies and options for a better approach. Presented by Australian Lawyers for Human Rights.

Details: tickets \$25.00 (\$15.00 concession); 5:45pm for a 6:00pm start to 7:30pm; King & Wood Mallesons, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney; book tickets online at <http://www.equalitylaw.org.au/events/sydney-event-inside-manus>.

Public health, human rights and asylum seeker detention

Tuesday 27 May, Kensington NSW

This symposium will discuss the public health issues of Australia's asylum seeker program and their relationship to human rights. It will bring together academics, health practitioners, policy-makers and those with hands-on experience in detention centres.

Details: 6:00pm-8:00pm; Scientia Building, University of NSW Kensington Campus; for further details, contact Professor Heather Worth at h.worth@unsw.edu.au or (02) 9385 8658.

African Women's Voices: FGM and women's leadership

Thursday 29 May, Sydney NSW

Part of the Australian Human Rights Commission's RightsTalk series, this session will give voice to African women issues and rights on female genital mutilation (FGM) and the importance of the role of women's leadership within the community. Speakers will include Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, Juliana Nkrumah AM (founder of African Women Australia) and Kenya-based gender consultant Mabel Mali Isoli.

Details: 5:30pm-7:30pm; Australian Human Rights Commission, Level 3, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney; for further details and to RSVP, visit

<http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/rightstalk-african-womens-voices-fgm-and-womens-leadership-tickets-11443464711>.

Foundation House workshop: Trauma-focused counselling course for counsellors

Thursday 29 May and Thursday 5 June, Brunswick VIC

This two-day course provides counsellors and psychologists with further skills for working with refugee survivors of torture and trauma.

Details: \$330.00; 9:30am-4:30pm; 4 Gardiner Street, Brunswick; for further information and to register, visit http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/professional_development/index.htm.

The human and economic costs of offshore detention

Friday 30 May, Darwin NT

Hear from human rights lawyer and refugee advocate Julian Burnside AO QC, ex-Salvation Army worker Mark Isaacs (author of "The Undesirables", which chronicles his time at the Nauru offshore detention centre) and ex-Salvation Army worker MaryAnn Uechtritz, who has worked in both Nauru and Manus Island.

Details: tickets \$10.00 (\$5.00 concession); 6:45pm-9:00pm; Christ Church Cathedral, 2 Smith Street, Darwin; book tickets online at <http://bookwhen.com/dassanforum>.

Africa Day celebration

Saturday 31 May, Blacktown NSW

This event will feature an All Nations parade, with people from 54 nations marching together in a united celebration of Africa Day.

Details: 9:00am-4:00pm; Blacktown City Centre; for further details, visit

<https://www.facebook.com/events/584218494995814>.

The Darebin Response Asylum Seeker Benefit GIG

Sunday 1 June, Thornbury VIC

This event will feature 8Foot Felix, Lotek, Florelie Escano, Ghost Towns of the Midwest and Nick Murphy and Band, plus special guest speaker Julian Burnside. All proceeds go directly to local asylum seekers.

Details: tickets \$15.00 presale or \$20.00 at the door (children free but must be accompanied by a responsible adult); 1:00pm-6:00pm; Thornbury Theatre, 859 High Street, Thornbury; for further details and to book tickets, visit <http://thethornburytheatre.com/event/darebin-response-asylum-seeker-benefit-gig>.

Foundation House workshop: Socially Inclusive classrooms for young people

Monday 2 June, Brunswick VIC

This workshop explores ways in which an understanding of human rights and social inclusion can contribute to the wellbeing, education and pathways of young people who have an asylum seeking and refugee background. Participants will examine a social inclusion framework and strategies to support students within and beyond the classroom.

Details: 4:00pm-7:00pm; 4 Gardiner Street, Brunswick; for further information and to register, visit http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/professional_development/index.htm.

CEH workshop: CALD community engagement and participation

Wednesday 4 June, Richmond VIC

Meaningful engagement is essential for high-quality program planning, delivery and evaluation. This training provides strategies for sustained and innovative engagement with CALD communities and methods to account for cultural considerations within the engagement strategy. Hosted by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH).

Details: \$250.00; 9:30am-4:30pm; 23 Lennox Street, Richmond; for more information and to register, visit <http://ceh.org.au/training/workshops>.

Why Interculturalism?

Thursday 5 June, Preston VIC

This Q&A session, led by historian and humanitarian Leigh Ryley, will explore the concept of interculturalism. Dinner will be provided.

Details: 6:00pm-8:00pm; Darebin Intercultural Centre, 59A Roseberry Avenue, Preston; for further information, call (03) 8470 8440 or email intercultural@darebin.vic.gov.au.

Cultural shift: Symposium on supporting migrant and refugee families through settlement

Thursday 5 June, Parramatta NSW

Organised by Settlement Services International, this symposium will bring together leaders and experts in migrant and refugee service provision to highlight the important role of services from various sectors in meeting the needs of recently arrived migrant and refugee families. It will showcase and promote effective services, delivery models and approaches for supporting recently arrived migrant and refugee families through their settlement journey.

Details: \$65.00; 9:00am-4:30pm; Novotel Parramatta, 350 Church Street, Parramatta; register online at <http://www.regodirect.com.au/culturalshift>.

Cultural Diversity in Ageing Conference

Thursday 12 and Friday 13 June, Melbourne VIC

This conference will feature a range of keynote, workshop and poster presentations addressing culturally inclusive aged care. This year's conference theme, Shaping Inclusive Services, will showcase culturally inclusive measures and models designed to ensure quality outcomes for older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The conference will also see the presentation of the inaugural Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing Excellence Awards that recognise and celebrate best practice examples of culturally inclusive care across the country.

Details: registration \$275.00 for one day and \$440.00 for two days; Melbourne Convention Centre; for further information and to register, go to <http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/conference-2014>.

STARTTS workshop: Community development with refugee communities

Friday 13 June, Carramar NSW

State terrorism and organised violence target the very essence of community relationships. When relationships are affected communities fragment and a lack of trust affects social interactions. This one-day workshop is designed to address the impact of trauma and state terrorism on communities and provide guidance for liaising with refugee groups.

Details: \$149.00 (students \$99.00); 9:30am-4:30pm; 152-168 The Horsley Drive, Carramar; for further information and to register, visit <http://www.startts.org.au/training>.

Annual Human Rights Dinner

Friday 13 June (Melbourne) and Friday 20 June (Sydney)

The Human Rights Dinner is a fundraiser for the Human Rights Law Centre and Justice Connect. The guest speaker at this year's dinner is Hina Jilani, a pioneering international human rights lawyer, pro-democracy campaigner and leading activist in Pakistan's women's movement who founded Pakistan's first all-women law firm, its first legal aid centre and its national Human Rights Commission.

Details: tickets \$180.00 (\$110.00 concession and NGOs); 6:30pm for a 7:00pm start; Melbourne event at Plaza Ballroom, beneath the Regent Theatre, 191 Collins Street, Melbourne; Sydney event at The Great Hall, University of Sydney Camperdown campus; for further details and to book tickets, visit <http://hrlc.org.au/humanrightsdinner2014>.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Protecting refugee children

Amnesty International Australia's Refugee Coordinator Graham Thom and researchers from the University of Sydney have produced a best-practice guide to the resettlement of refugee children. The report, "Removing the Stumbling Blocks", highlights strategies and initiatives to improve the protection of vulnerable minors, in particular through a more targeted use of resettlement. Access the report at <http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/34547/>

UNSW Refugee education resources

Professor Jane McAdam from the University of NSW features in a series of videos providing background on the Refugee Convention, refugee rights and protections, myths and facts about asylum seekers in Australia and refugee policies. The videos are available at <http://www.law.unsw.edu.au/news-events/refugees-%E2%80%93-professor-jane-mcadam>

Amnesty International update on Manus conditions

A follow-up report from Amnesty International on conditions faced by asylum seekers on Manus Island finds the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments have not adequately addressed concerns raised in the December 2013 "This is Breaking People" report. Read the report at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA12/002/2014/en>

Report on excessive charges levied on remittances

The UK-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI) estimates that if remittance charges were brought down to the world average, the money saved could educate an extra 14 million primary school children, half of all those currently out of school on the continent. Read the ODI report at <http://www.odi.org.uk/www.odi.org/remittances-africa>

MYAN NSW Employment and Young People from Multicultural Backgrounds forum

The report from the MYAN NSW sector development forum on Employment and Young People from Multicultural Backgrounds is now available online. The forum was held in Blacktown, Sydney in November 2013. To access the report which includes an overview of proceedings, recommendations and further reading, go to <http://myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20NSW%20Employment%20Forum%20Report%20FN%281%29.pdf>

Refugee youth perspectives on education

Two new journal articles explore the experiences of refugee youth resettling in Australia with a focus on education. Jonnell Uptin, Jay Wright and Valerie Harwood's "Finding education: Stories of how former young refugees constituted strategic identities in order to access school" is available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13613324.2014.885428>. "It felt like I was a black dot on white paper" also examines young former refugees' experiences of entering Australian high schools and can be accessed at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs13384-012-0082-8>

Appointment Reminder Translation Tool

The NSW Refugee Health Service has made available a resource that allows people to easily produce translated appointment reminder forms in 17 community languages. Find out more at <http://www.swsld.nsw.gov.au/refugee/appointment/>

OPPORTUNITIES

For employment opportunities, go to <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/job.php>. For volunteering opportunities, go to <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/g/vol.php>.

Nominations open for NSW Humanitarian Awards

The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) is accepting nominations for the 2014 Humanitarian Awards, to be presented at the Sydney launch of Refugee Week at Granville Town Hall, Sydney on Saturday, 14 June. The Awards recognise people who have made a positive contribution towards refugee issues in New South Wales. Nominations are sought in the following categories: Refugee Community Worker; Refugee Supporter; Youth; Education; Government and Legal; Media; Sport; Rural and Regional; Business; and Best Project. Nominations close on Friday, 23 May. Find out more at

<http://www.startts.org.au/news-events/refugee-week/humanitarian-awards/>

Submissions sought for ANU migration law conference

The Australian National University (ANU) Migration Law Program is seeking submissions for a conference on "Challenges to Sovereignty: The impact of Migration Law and Policy", which will be held on November 7-8, 2014. Online abstracts for papers are open for papers that deal with national security, cultural identity, public discourse, the body politic, economic paradigms, human rights, democracy and international integration. The deadline for submissions is 6 June, 2014. Details on submitting abstracts are available at <https://law.anu.edu.au/conferences/call-papers-challenges-sovereignty> and the conference website at <https://law.anu.edu.au/conferences/challenges>

Refugee Advocacy Media Project

The Refugee Advocacy Network is seeking to establish a Refugee Advocacy Media Project to gain better coverage of the impact of policies on asylum seekers, provide more informed commentary on news reports and statements by government and to provide media training for people from refugee backgrounds as well as media advocates. You can support the project by visiting <http://startsomegood.com/refugeemedia>. For further details contact trconcepts@netspace.net.au.

New forum to discuss international refugee issues

The Refugee Research Network (RRN) has launch an online discussion forum which will address issues raised during various events, like conferences, workshops and symposia. Discussions will be moderated, and at the end, the "threads" will be collected, edited and published as an e-pub document as part of a larger "e-Symposium" and posted on various partner sites, including in the RRN repository. It will be easily available online and will provide a quick snapshot of current thinking about particular themes and issues. Everyone can read the content, but potential contributors must register at <http://refugeereseach.net/ms/forums/how-to-participate/>. The latest forum discussed gender, security and access to education in the Dadaab refugee camps. Find out more at <http://bit.ly/1IX6dba>

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

A busy person's digest of some recent media coverage of refugee issues:

(Inclusion in this summary does not imply that RCOA agrees with the article's content or vouches for its accuracy)

PNG request for police help on Manus Island denied

The Australian Federal Police refused a request from Papua New Guinea for an officer to help interview witnesses to the killing of asylum seeker Reza Berati on Manus Island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April) <http://bit.ly/1fHxbxK>

Asylum seekers taking legal action over data breach to be transferred

Asylum seekers involved in legal action against the government following the public release of their personal details are being moved to a remote detention centre thousands of kilometres from their legal representatives just a day before their case is due to be heard in court. (The Guardian, 1 April)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/01/asylum-seekers-taking-legal-action-over-data-breach-to-be-transferred>

Manus riots: PNG police say G4S refusing to be interviewed over riots, death at centre

The former security management firm at the Manus Island detention centre is refusing to be interviewed about February's deadly riots, police in Papua New Guinea say. (7 News, 2 April) <http://yhoo.it/QGLwoT>

Government defends relocation of asylum seekers ahead of court case

The office of Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has hit back at suggestions it is frustrating justice by transferring asylum seekers across the country. (SBS News, 2 April) <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/04/02/government-defends-relocation-asylum-seekers-ahead-court-case>

Report on inquiry into Manus Island death won't be revealed

The Abbott government is not planning to release the interim report of its inquiry into the death of one asylum seeker and injuries to more than 60 others on Manus Island in February. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 3 April) <http://bit.ly/1goJsXI>

Refugee assessments for Manus Island detainees to be delivered within a month

The first refugee assessments will be delivered to asylum seekers at the Manus Island detention centre within a month, according to a statement from Immigration Minister Scott Morrison. (ABC News, 3 April) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-03/manus-refugee-assessments-to-be-delivered-within-month-morrison/5365832>

Asylum seekers stranded by Abbott policy

A United Nations expert on people smuggling and human trafficking says Canberra's tough but "questionable" policy on dealing with asylum seekers arriving by boat has successfully destroyed the current migrant smuggling model into Australia. (Sky News, 3 April) <http://www.skynews.com.au/national/article.aspx?id=964213>

Internal opposition to resettling asylum seekers in Cambodia

A possible deal to resettle Australian-bound asylum seekers in Cambodia has been heavily criticised by one of the country's longest-serving politicians who has warned against the country becoming a "dumping ground". (The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 April) <http://bit.ly/1hPYHND>

Asylum seeker family must go to Darwin to make room in Brisbane: court

Lawyers for the immigration minister say an asylum-seeker family at the centre of a High Court battle needs to be transferred to Darwin to make room for two more families needing medical treatment in Brisbane. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 April) <http://bit.ly/1h5oiCm>

Child detention 'cruel', inquiry told

High school student Bashir Yousufi is grateful for his life in Australia but the Afghan refugee still harbours deep sadness about the trauma he was forced to endure while waiting to be processed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 April) <http://www.smh.com.au/national/child-detention-cruel-inquiry-told-20140404-3646h.html>

HRW raises concern over possible deal to resettle asylum seekers in Cambodia

Human Rights Watch says Australia and Cambodia have been very secretive about negotiations on a possible deal to resettle asylum seekers, labelling any potential arrangement as very concerning. (Radio Australia, 5 April) <http://bit.ly/1gB5wy0>

Manus Island riot: Asylum seeker speaks of witnessing Reza Berati's death

The ABC has obtained an eyewitness account of the murder of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati during the February riot inside the Manus Island detention centre. (Radio Australia, 5 April) <http://bit.ly/POaIV>

Labor and Greens demand full report into breaches of Indonesian waters

The Opposition and Greens are demanding a full government account of the circumstances surrounding Australian border protection vessels' six breaches of Indonesian territory, following the release of a heavily redacted report. (The Guardian, 7 April) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/07/labor-greens-demand-full-report-into-indonesian-breaches>

Labor MP Melissa Parke urges party to soften asylum line after poor election showing

Prominent Labor MP Melissa Parke has urged the opposition to change its asylum seeker policy, declaring the ALP's record low vote in the West Australian Senate election highlighted the need for policy as well as party reform. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April) <http://bit.ly/1gFG0rc>

Immigration department accused of intimidating refugee advocate

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has been accused of monitoring a refugee advocate's social media and publicly intimidating her, after demanding through Twitter that she remove a third-party post on her Facebook wall. (The Guardian, 7 April)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/07/immigration-department-accused-of-intimidating-refugee-advocate>

Cambodia will put refugees at risk: academics

Dangerous political instability in Cambodia could put asylum seekers at grave risk, a leading academic has warned, as Immigration Minister Scott Morrison gave his strongest indication yet that refugees may be resettled there. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/cambodia-will-put-refugees-at-risk-academics-20140407-zgrv5.html>

Sailors sacked over racist and anti-Muslim Facebook posts

Up to six Navy sailors have been sacked or ordered to justify their jobs over racist and anti-Muslim Facebook posts. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/sailors-sacked-over-racist-and-antimuslim-facebook-posts-20140408-zqsdv.html>

Court quashes decision that refuses visas for asylum seekers convicted of crimes

The Federal Court has quashed a government decision to refuse protection visas to a group of refugees who were convicted of offences while in detention. (ABC News, 9 April)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-09/federal-court-quashes-government-decision-on-asylum-seeker-visas/5378510>

Gillian Triggs accuses government of pulling strings to deny UN

The head of the Australian Human Rights Commission has accused the Australian government of "pulling strings" to prevent United Nations' access to offshore processing centres in Nauru and Manus Island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 April) <http://bit.ly/P1kc2T>

Nauru says UN inspectors weren't invited, questions cancellation as 'publicity stunt'

The Nauru Government has questioned whether a United Nations inspection team is using the Pacific Island nation for a publicity stunt. (Australian Network News, 9 April)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-09/an-nauru-says-un-cancellation-of-detention-centre-inspections-a/5377990>

Bob Carr pushed Julia Gillard to adopt Coalition policies on asylum seekers

Former foreign minister Bob Carr advised the office of then prime minister Julia Gillard to adopt Tony Abbott's border protection policies just two months after he entered Federal Parliament. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 April) <http://bit.ly/1ksv6NO>

Refugees will be able to temporarily resettle in Nauru, Minister Scott Morrison says

Some asylum seekers held in detention on Nauru will be able to temporarily settle on the island if they are found to be refugees, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says. (Radio Australia, 10 April)

<http://bit.ly/1kxFzYI>

Minister: Real promise for regional resettlement deal with Cambodia, Nauru

Asylum seekers on Nauru could find themselves in Cambodia if Australia seals a deal with the two countries. (SBS News, 10 April) <http://bit.ly/1i6wiD9>

Witnesses at Manus unrest inquiry 'will not be protected from retribution'

Australia cannot guarantee legal protection for asylum seeker and private contractors who wish to give up potentially damning evidence at the upcoming Senate inquiry into the Manus Island disturbances, the clerk of the Senate has said. (The Guardian, 10 April)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/10/witnesses-at-manus-unrest-inquiry-will-not-be-protected-from-retribution>

Tamil asylum seekers fighting for his life

A Sri Lankan asylum seeker on a bridging visa is fighting for his life after dousing himself in petrol following a decision by the Australian immigration department to deport him back to Sri Lanka. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tamil-asylum-seeker-fighting-for-his-life-20140410-zqt6q.html>

Australian servicemen accused of rogue conduct

Australian soldiers on leave from the army are enlisting as guards at the Manus detention camp in Papua New Guinea amid allegations of drug abuse and thuggish conduct among its newly recruited security force. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/australian-servicemen-accused-of-rogue-conduct-20140411-36iily.html>

Asylum-seekers: thousands rally in protest against government's policies

Thousands of people rallied around the country on Palm Sunday to protest against the federal government's asylum-seeker policies. (The Guardian, 13 April)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/13/asylum-seekers-thousands-rally-in-protest-against-governments-policies>

Christian leaders protesting detention of children arrested at Julie Bishop's office

Eleven protesters, including priests and pastors, have been removed by police from Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's office in Perth. (ABC News, 14 April)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-14/protesters-arrested-at-julie-bishop27s-office/5388996?section=wa>

Asia urged to toughen borders

Australia has urged its Asian neighbours to strengthen their border controls in line with the Coalition's hardline approach to people-smuggling, arguing it is essential to create a regional deterrence to international crime and terror. (The Australian, 15 April) <http://bit.ly/1iQeMkp>

Asylum families threaten legal action over potential for babies sent to Nauru, Manus

A law firm has asked Immigration Minister Scott Morrison not to send 26 Australian-born babies and their families to offshore detention centres, threatening possible legal action if he does not. (The Age, 15 April) <http://bit.ly/RkFj2b>

Asylum-seeker registrations in Indonesia down by 80 per cent

Australia's hard-line strategy against people smuggling has reduced asylum-seeker registrations in Indonesia by more than 80 per cent this year. (The Australian, 17 April)

<http://bit.ly/1qQQA6R>

Dengue fever outbreak hits Nauru sparking calls for restoration of health panel

A dengue fever outbreak has gripped one of Australia's offshore processing centres in Nauru, raising serious questions about the welfare of asylum seekers on the island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April) <http://bit.ly/1meZcli>

'Stop the suffering of children in detention', says Archbishop Philip Freier

Melbourne's Anglican Archbishop has criticised asylum seeker policy which he said was causing great suffering, particularly to nearly 1000 children in mainland detention "and another 177 in grim conditions in Nauru". (The Age, 18 April) <http://bit.ly/1gOpg28>

Indonesia speaks out on asylum seeker amid Australia tension

Jakarta called on governments on Monday to stop "shifting responsibility" for asylum seekers, in veiled criticism of Australia's hardline policy of towing boatloads of would-be refugees back to Indonesia. (Jakarta Globe, 21 April)

<http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/indonesia-speaks-asylum-seekers-amid-australia-tension/>

Reza Berati death: Papua New Guinea nationals attacked asylum seekers on Manus Is

Papua New Guinean nationals employed as security guards on Manus Island attacked asylum seekers at the detention centre more than 24 hours before Iranian Reza Berati died in a night of shocking violence, new footage shows. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 April) <http://bit.ly/1xmGFI>

Australian Government announces \$20 million assistance for Syrian refugees

Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, has announced that it will provide \$20 million for children in Lebanon and Jordan who have fled across the borders as refugees due to the Syrian civil war. (Radio Australia, 22 April) <http://bit.ly/1k1Yozr>

Nauru breaching international law, says UN

Nauru is breaching its international obligations by failing to establish an independent body to investigate torture and human rights abuses in the detention centre. (Brisbane Times, 22 April) <http://bit.ly/1i2QqGS>

Labor and Greens call for report on Manus violence to be released immediately

Labor and the Greens have called for the immediate release of the federal government's report into the fatal violence on Manus Island after graphic images surfaced showing Papua New Guinea guards attacking asylum seekers. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April) <http://bit.ly/1mBE2R6>

Unexploded wartime bomb found in Nauru detention centre

An unexploded wartime bomb has been found in the section of the offshore processing centre on Nauru that detains children, pregnant women and families, raising serious questions about whether the site is safe to hold asylum seekers. (The Guardian, 22 April) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/22/unexploded-wartime-bomb-found-in-nauru-detention-centre>

UN representatives criticise Abbott government's boat tow-back policy

United Nations representatives have joined the criticism of the Abbott government's boat tow-back policy and called on Australia to process asylum seekers who reach Australian waters instead of returning them to Indonesia. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 23 April) <http://bit.ly/1rkB94R>

Cambodia resettlement deal for asylum seekers moves closer

A deal with Cambodia to resettle asylum seekers is moving closer with Scott Morrison declaring that a country's economic capacity is irrelevant to his expansion of a "club" of nations to take refugees. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 April) <http://bit.ly/1i9ZWla>

Asylum seeker resettlement deals 'not just about safety': UNHCR

The United Nations refugee agency has warned resettlement countries are obliged to deliver education and labour rights and "not just safety" to asylum seekers, as the Abbott government prepares to do a deal with Cambodia. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 April) <http://bit.ly/1isUFf3>

Nauru guards accused of assaulting children

Security guards at the family camp on Nauru have been accused of verbally and physically abusing child asylum seekers in a letter of concern from staff at the centre. (The Guardian, 24 April) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/24/nauru-guards-accused-of-assaulting-children>

No spike in post-monsoon asylum seeker boats, says Morrison

No people-smuggling venture has succeeded in landing asylum seekers in Australia for more than four months, the government says. (The Australian, 26 April) <http://bit.ly/1pESnhU>

Nauru refugees to be given five-year work visas

Asylum seekers detained on Nauru who are found to be refugees will be given a five-year working visa for Nauru, a leaked document obtained by Guardian Australia says. (The Guardian, 27 April) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/27/nauru-refugees-to-be-given-five-year-work-visas>

Manus riots: Morrison backs down from guaranteeing safety of asylum seekers

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has backed away from guaranteeing the safety of asylum seekers inside the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre in Papua New Guinea (ABC News, 28 April) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-28/manus-island-safety-difficult-to-ensure-at-all-times-morrison/5414272>

Scott Morrison visit sent Manus tension soaring, says G4S whistleblower

Scott Morrison directly contributed to tension in the Manus Island detention centre during a late September visit, according to an explosive set of allegations made by former G4S guard Martin Appleby,

who is the first guard to speak publicly since the unrest on Manus in February that left one asylum seeker dead. (The Guardian, 28 April)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/28/scott-morrison-visit-sent-manus-tension-soaring-says-g4s-whistleblower>

Documents show Manus warnings were made in November

Major upgrades to security at the Manus Island detention centre, including the installation of CCTV cameras and better fencing, had been recommended by the commander of Operation Sovereign Borders three months before the deadly riots in February, but were not acted on, new documents show. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 April) <http://bit.ly/1frmK7e>

Plan for Cambodia to accept Australia's asylum seekers

Cambodia has signalled "in principle" to accept asylum seekers intercepted while trying to migrate to Australia in a controversial deal that will see them being forced to live in one of the world's poorest nations. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/plan-for-cambodia-to-accept-australias-asylum-seekers-20140430-zr1i6.html>

Government has no idea how many people accessed asylum seekers' details

The Department of Immigration does not know how many people accessed the personal details of almost 10,000 asylum seekers in detention that were accidentally placed on its website, raising the prospect that the confidential information has been circulated to an unknown number of people around the world. (The Guardian, 30 April) <http://bit.ly/1haQ3Wy>

Amnesty accuses Nauru of hiding conditions after refusing detention centres access

Amnesty International has accused the Nauruan government of trying to avoid public scrutiny of the treatment of asylum seekers on the Pacific Island. (Radio Australia, 30 April) <http://bit.ly/1kfnEPY>

Rights groups criticise Australia deal to transfer refugees to Cambodia

Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians once fled the Khmer Rouge's killing fields but now the impoverished southeast Asian autocracy is on the verge of a contentious deal to accept refugees that Australia does not want. (Financial Times, 30 April)

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/2b4c2dea-d029-11e3-af2b-00144feabdc0.html#axzz30Pz5LnTy>

Manus detainees seek witness protection

Lawyers acting for asylum seekers who say they witnessed the killing of Reza Berati at the Manus Island detention centre in February have launched a High Court action to have them placed in protective custody in Australia. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/manus-detainees-seek-witness-protection-20140430-zr1vb.html>

Fears aid budget could be raided to cover cost of asylum detention centres

There are fears the aid budget will be again raided to plug a shortfall of as much as \$1.2 billion in the cost of running asylum seeker detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 April)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/fears-aid-budget-could-be-raided-to-cover-cost-of-asylum-detention-centres-20140501-zr1z1.html>