

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

Established in 2000 Refugee Action Collective (RAC) is a democratic, grass root collective representing a broad cross-section of the community and is a member of Refugee Advocacy Network (RAN).

We fight for the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees and call on the Australian Government to:

- End mandatory detention of asylum seekers that violates their basic human rights and contravenes UN conventions to which Australia is a signatory.
- End all offshore processing of asylum seekers, close Manus Island, Nauru and Christmas Island detention centres.
- Abolish Temporary Protection Visas and provide permanent protection to refugees.
- Stop looking for other so called solutions on the soil of sovereign states in our neighborhood.
- Cease deporting asylum seekers to countries where they can face persecution, torture and death.
- Urgently remove all children from detention together with their parents to enable them to have a normal childhood and education as Australia's laws demand.
- Review all ASIO assessments and cease indefinite detention for all.
- Restore appeal rights to the courts for all asylum seekers.
- Compensate all who have suffered as a result of their detention, enduring physical and psychological harm.
- Fully implement all UN conventions that protect the human rights of asylum seekers.
- Accept 30,000 refugees per year as a demonstration of Australia's real capacity to make a difference for those who seek our protection.
- De-criminalize people smuggling and commit to all treaties dealing with safety of lives at sea.



Faysal Ishak Ahmed, a detainee on Manus Island, due to neglect of his many ailments, brought to the attention of the camp doctors over many months was finally flown to Brisbane after he fell and suffered severe brain injury. He died in hospital on Xmas Eve 2016



Omid Masoumali died after setting himself on fire at Nauru detention centre - 29 April 2016



Fazel Chegeni died in detention on Christmas Island. Fazel's death is the latest consequence of Australia's cruel 'border force' policies, which sees refugees languish for over 4 years in brutal detention centres - 8 November 2015



Hamid Kehazaei died because of delay in treating his infection at Manus Island - 2 September 2014



Reza Barati was beaten to death when locals invaded Manus Island Detention Centre - 17 February 2014



Refugee Action Collective (VIC)

www.rac-vic.org

[fb.me/racvic](https://www.facebook.com/racvic)

[@racvictoria](https://twitter.com/racvictoria)

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT?

Attend our meeting every **Monday 6.30pm** at **ANF House, 535 Elizabeth Street**, Melbourne (same side as Vic Markets) to assist with the campaign to broaden the movement for refugees.

Join RAC emailing list, go to: www.rac-vic.org/subscribe

Donate - Deposit directly to Commonwealth Bank, BSB: 063262, Account number: 10252396 or send a cheque: Refugee Action Collective (VIC) PO Box 578, Carlton South VIC 3053



REFUGEE FACTS

#1
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The **COST** of keeping asylum seekers from our shores is very high, \$10 billion over 4 years according to a government audit. Border protection is regarded by many economists as an extravagant waste. Asylum seekers living in the community in Australia receive \$210 per week from Centrelink, a sum less than the dole. Those who arrived after 13 August 2013 aren't allowed to work. To reverse these policies, releasing all from detention, allowing them to work, pay taxes and contribute to society would save billions.

#2
HR

It is the **HUMAN RIGHT** of every man, woman and child to seek asylum. Article 14 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution". Asylum seekers have the right to be assessed by the UN High Commission For Refugees (UNHCR) or by any country like Australia which is a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. To gain refugee status, asylum seekers must prove persecution in accordance with the Convention. Their deportation to danger is a breach of the Convention (refoulement).

#3
MA

The Refugee Convention states that the **MODE** of **ARRIVAL** is not relevant when their need for protection is decided. Despite this, refugees who arrived by boat since 13 August 2013 are languishing in detention on Christmas Island, Nauru and Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG). Nauru is an extremely poor country with no functioning legal system. Manus Island detention centre has officially closed since the

Supreme Court of PNG ruled that it is an illegal facility.

In 2017 the Australian government built new camps on the island and in November/December 2017 attempted to relocate the refugees and asylum seekers. Many of the men on Manus resisted the government's efforts to forcibly move them to the new facility & subsequently, their water, food electricity & medication was cut off. After 23 days of resistance, guards entered the closed centre & beat refugees & asylum seekers & forced them to move to the new camps. These facilities are incomplete & inadequate, many lack adequate sewerage meaning the people there are forced to live in unsanitary conditions.

The possibility of the US taking asylum seekers from these islands is uncertain and some fear that if the US doesn't take them, they will be forced to settle on the island. There are attacks on asylum seekers and refugees on Manus Island and Nauru by locals and police. Some women have been raped. All these places have been described by psychiatrists as "factories of mental illness". About 95% of boat arrivals are recognised as genuine refugees, yet these people are in limbo, the Australian government vows that they will never be settled in Australia.

#4
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Australia is not being overrun by asylum seekers. In 2014 fewer than 20,000 gained protection. The total annual **MIGRATION INTAKE** is about 200,000 while a similar number leave Australia permanently each year. Europe had arrivals of 1 million in 2016, the numbers leaving Syria alone for Turkey run into hundreds of thousands.

#5
QJ

People who come by boat are not **QUEUE JUMPERS**. There are no queues in war zones in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. To travel anywhere where the embassies and UNHCR offices are can be extremely dangerous. In any case the process to get visas or passports can be corrupted and attempts to leave are often criminal offences that can result in persecution, torture, incarceration or worse.

#6
MD

MANDATORY DETENTION awaits all arrivals to Australia in boats while those who come by plane are not detained. Since the Labor government introduced mandatory detention in 1992, more and more punitive measures have been added in order to deter others - a case of

punishing the innocent so that others will remain in extreme danger at home or in transit.

#7
PS

PEOPLE SMUGGLERS are employed by asylum seekers because they are the only people who can get them to Australia. The boats have now been reduced, but people are stuck in Indonesia and Malaysia in the harshest of conditions. Many still attempt to reach Australia with the help of people smugglers but their passage is blocked. Worse, Australia has paid thousands of dollars to people smugglers to take people back to transit countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. This practice is now well documented and it breaches Indonesian and Australian laws.

#8
SL

Indefinite detention and towing back boats does not **SAVE LIVES**. Sure, some have drowned close to our coast but forced returns and deportations often result in drownings and deaths from other causes, elsewhere. Yet there are still boats on their way, only to be turned back by Border Force. The people who fled for their lives from countries such as Syria, Iraq and Myanmar have few choices. This push factor and their blighted lives in transit leave them with no alternative, their only hope for starting a new life is a passage arranged by people smugglers. Our government's response to mental illness, deaths and rapes inside offshore detention shows its lack of care for human life. Only timely settlement and an increase in the refugee intake will save lives. The recent initiative to accept 12,000 Syrian refugees will save lives. This is to be applauded while condemning the delays of implementation and the Government's insistence that Syrians already in detention will remain there, indefinitely.

#9
P

Since the Rudd government introduced measures such as offshore detention, refugee **POLICY** has truly been a race to the bottom. The Coalition government with the support of the Labor opposition:

1. Practices the reckless, secret and dangerous policy of towing and dispatching boats back to Indonesia.
2. Blocks by legislation legal challenges and reviews effecting asylum seekers.
3. Offers only Temporary Protection Visas to refugees seeking permanent protection.
4. Hides the truth of what's going on offshore, in Christmas Island, Nauru and Manus Island. Lack

of care for detainees, and indeed, the refusal to assess claims for protection of nearly 30,000, amount to breaches of international law and crimes against humanity.

5. Imposes indefinite detention on some categories of asylum seekers
6. Returns asylum seekers to danger
7. Makes and attempts to make deals with poor developing countries in our region to take on Australia's responsibility and to settle refugees. Nauru and Papua New Guinea are dependent on Australia's financial support and are tempted by extra monetary offers. To their credit, East Timor, Cambodia and the Philippines have rejected such deals offered by our government. The Supreme Court of PNG has ruled that detaining people indefinitely and without charge and trial contravenes that country's constitution.
8. Gives up people to jurisdictions where they are unprotected by national and international law.
9. Threatens Australian administrative staff, social workers and other employees with a possible sentence of 2 years jail if they reveal the truth about the dangers and conditions on offshore detention centres.

CONCLUSION

Australia lives in the world. Our economy benefits mightily from it. Our leaders trumpet our success, 25 quarters of uninterrupted growth, the highest standard of living, the most profitable banks and endless plains. We should increase our refugee intake to 30,000 per year.

Australia has always done well out of immigrants. We could do well again by leaving behind the politics of fear and loathing, the dog whistle, the obsession with deterrence, the demonization and dehumanization of asylum seekers. Many will be our citizens of tomorrow, it does not make sense to persecute and brutalize them and the people who deal with them. If we want to live in the world we have to deal with all it brings, including inconvenient obligations, no nation can claim exceptionalism if it sees itself as a responsible international citizen, as Australia does.