




About the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)

RCOA is the national umbrella body for refugees, asylum seekers and the people who work with them.

We promote the adoption of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees, asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants in Australia and internationally.

Our work includes:

- Research
- Policy analysis
- Advocacy
- Community education

A stylized background graphic featuring three human-like figures. The figures on the left and middle are green, while the one on the right is grey. They are depicted in a simple, rounded style, with their arms raised in a gesture of welcome or support. The figures are positioned behind the text, creating a layered effect.

“Multiculturalism is about inviting every individual member of society to be everything they can be, and supporting each new arrival in overcoming whatever obstacles they face as they adjust to a new country and society and allowing them to flourish as individuals.”

– Former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Chris Bowen, 2011

Asylum seekers who arrived by boat

Prolonged indefinite detention

Suspension of visa processing

Denial of work rights (recently changed)

Minimal income support (89% of equivalent rates for permanent residents)

Made to sign Code of Behaviour

Offshore processing

Different processing system (faster and less thorough)

Denial of government-funded legal advice

Restrictions on family reunion

Limited eligibility for settlement services

Denial of permanent residency

Asylum seekers who arrived by boat

*“Young people in CD [community detention] participate in schooling but are not eligible to receive a VCE [Victorian Certificate of Education] if they are over 18. Lay over that the lack of work rights and lack of income if you are on a Centrelink payment and the **long-term ramifications of this in terms of entrenched poverty**. What is the cost of this in the long term?”*

*“There will be **serious and compounding consequences**, not just for this cohort but also for the wider community, of not addressing this need. Access to established English conversation classes will create a **sense of belonging** and build **self-reliance and confidence** and assist in **bridging inter-cultural divides** in the local community.”*

*“For people here in our community, the mental health impact of family separation, not being able to see hope in the future, or develop any plans, has had a profound impact on services and the mental and physical health of our clients. **It’s going to be long-term**. Asylum seekers are incredibly depressed and this is just the start. We’re going to see a significant increase in mental health issues and an **incredible burden will be paid in the future for this policy**.”*

Asylum seekers who arrived by boat

*“They call it a ‘Bridging Visa’ but when you translate it to Arabic, it is ‘passing visa’. But no, I will call it a **‘grave visa’**...I hate whenever I ask and they say: ‘You have to wait’...**In Australia I am waiting, waiting, waiting...**”*

*“I think these policies that they are applying on us is just like to **poison somebody, slowly and gradually** so that the people should not know that [the government of Australia] are the killer. It is to kill someone by part. If we had remained in our country, we would have been killed one time, fast. Here, we are being killed slowly and gradually...**I feel imprisoned here for my whole life...**because of the ‘crime’ that I have committed, to come here because of persecution.”*

*“The TPV is not just a visa but a disturbing tool that will confine the thinking and intelligence of human beings, asylum seekers in this case, by acting as **invisible barbed wire** preventing them by every means possible from **moving forward and merely living a dignified life.**”*

Family separation

A stylized graphic in the background depicts a family of four. A large green arch at the top represents a mother. Below it, two green figures represent children, and a grey figure represents a father. The figures are simple, rounded shapes.

Limited places

High costs

Onerous documentation and evidentiary requirements

Limited visa options for extended family members

Prolonged waiting periods

Limited access to services

Limited availability of affordable migration advice

Specific restrictions for people who arrived by boat

Family separation

*“While your family is back in a not safe place and almost you are losing them, what is the point of you being safe? You will be **physically safe [but] you will not be mentally safe.**”*

*“We love this country but we **can’t get on with our lives** in this situation”.*

*“I never committed any crime, I work hard, I did a six-month course, I started working, earning on my own, not depending on the Government, to make myself look like a **good citizen** to them, and they have done this to me. I feel that maybe Australia **brought me to become a slave for them.** That’s how I classify it.”*

*“It might be six or eight years since they have last seen their family members. In the first week, everybody is happy and they want everybody in the house. The next week, the plan has been thrown out. There is some big family issue and the relationship is gone within one week...We have seen lots of **violence and conflicts** happening afterwards. That’s a long-term issue because they have **broken that relationship.**”*

*“That’s my concern, that there are thousands of men here **waiting endlessly, frustrated and angry.** What kind of position does that put the rest of the community? It really worries me, about the **social implications.**”*

Public and political debate

Perpetuation of myths and misinformation

Conflation of humanitarian issues with border security, criminality, etc

Prominence of negative portrayals of asylum seekers over positive stories

Lack of positive political leadership

= Highly distorted and largely negative debate




Public and political debate

*“It’s going to be harder for them with all these new thought patterns that are going on out there. People are going to **become more wary and more fearful of these newer people** who are arriving. The ones that are in and the ones that are coming might find it difficult because of the perceptions that are out there which are fuelled by media and political views.”*

*“A lot of the trauma literature talks about the role of acknowledgement of people’s experiences and how likely they are to recover if people not just in their immediate environment but in the wider environment, acknowledge what they’ve been through. If that’s not occurring, especially with that dialogue that’s going on about **‘unwelcome’** asylum seekers and refugees, **it limits people’s capacity to actually heal and contribute.**”*

*“We are noticing an increase in **serious assaults** on people in the community based on racial issues, especially since all of this **‘illegal’ political rhetoric** has come up”.*

*“When two elephants fight, it is the **grass underneath that suffers.**”*

A stylized background graphic featuring three human-like figures. The figure on the left is green, the middle one is green, and the one on the right is grey. They are all in a similar pose, with arms raised and legs bent, suggesting a sense of movement or dance. The figures are set against a light green circular arc that frames the top of the image.

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Questions?



Refugee Council
of Australia

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Ph: (02) 9211 9333

Fax: (02) 9211 9288

E-mail: admin@refugeecouncil.org.au

Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.au