



Position Statement: Asylum Seekers

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Multicultural Australia supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations with Australia's support in 1948. Multicultural Australia also supports the positions taken by successive Australian governments to ratify a range of other international human rights instruments, including the United Nations' Refugee Convention, Convention Against Torture, and Convention on the Rights of the Child. We note that the rights of all persecuted people to seek asylum in another country and not be returned to situations of danger are fundamental human rights protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Refugee Convention. We also acknowledge and respect the core principles of non-discrimination and non-penalisation underpinning these treaties.

Multicultural Australia recognises the importance of organisations and leaders expressing support for human rights and helping to ensure the community is aware of and supports actions which respect and protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Demonising asylum seekers not only risks increasing public antagonism, it also hinders effective re-settlement of refugees, which can in turn limit full participation in Australia's society and economy.

Multicultural Australia acknowledges that seeking asylum is not an illegal act under international law and that, in some countries, there are no legal avenues for people to apply for refugee status through their nation's official channels and they are forced to flee and seek asylum to ensure safety for themselves and their families. This acknowledgement is embedded in the Refugee Convention, which recognises that seeking asylum can require refugees to breach immigration rules and stipulates that refugees should not be penalised for this, whether through charges, arbitrary detention, discriminatory processing regimes or deportation.

Multicultural Australia believes all refugees and asylum seekers should be treated equally and compassionately, in accordance with the human rights principles Australia has officially expressed support for. We acknowledge the trauma that can be caused, in particular to children and young people, through experiences of detention and protracted visa status insecurity, its compounding impact on pre-existing trauma, and its disruption to an individual's journey seeking safety, wellbeing, and belonging.

Dividing refugees who arrive under the Humanitarian Program from those who arrive seeking asylum only serves to create two different classes of refugees. Multicultural Australia considers it in the best interests of all Australians for people seeking asylum and refugees to be provided with sufficient support upon arrival to enable them to participate fully in our economy and community as quickly as possible. Multicultural Australia recognises the complexity of supporting people seeking asylum and commits to working with all key stakeholders to create safety and positive outcomes.