



VICTORIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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SOME FACTS ABOUT ASYLUM SEEKERS

1. The proportion of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat is small.
 - Since 2001 it has never exceeded 4%
 - At its peak in 2001, it was less than 45%

2. Those who arrive by boat are overwhelmingly genuine refugees.
 - In recent years the acceptance rate of boat arrivals has fluctuated between 85 and 98%.

3. The majority of asylum seekers who arrive by air are not genuine refugees.
 - Only 45% have been accepted as refugees in recent years.

4. The number of claims for asylum made in Australia is miniscule compared to other countries (2009 figures, except South Africa, 2008).
 - Australia 6,170
 - USA 49,020
 - UK 29,840
 - France 41,980
 - Canada 33,250
 - South Africa 207,200

5. At the beginning of 2009, there were about 15.2 million refugees world wide.

6. Australia's current (2009/2010) annual program is to take only 13,750 refugees.
 - This is less than one tenth of one per cent (0.01%) of the total number of refugees.
 - Our population is approx one third of one per cent (0.03%) of the world total.
 - Our GDP is approx 1.6% of the world total
 - Our land mass is 5% of the world total.

7. No firm conclusions can be drawn about the impact on boat arrivals of Australian Government policy towards refugees:
 - The introduction of the "Pacific Solution" in 2001 was followed by a dramatic reduction in boat arrivals in Australia but its abolition in early 2008 was not followed by any dramatic increase in boat arrivals that year.
 - Temporary Protection Visas were introduced in 1999 but the record number of boat arrivals occurred in 2001.
 - The freeze in processing asylum applications from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan announced on 9/4/10 was followed by a 19% increase in boat arrivals from those two countries up to 21/5/10.

8. Conclusions to be drawn from these facts.
 - Our refugee program is mean and ungenerous.
 - On any measure we take far fewer refugees than we should.
 - The public focus on boat arrivals is irrational and misconceived.
 - Boat arrivals account for a small proportion of asylum seekers arriving in Australia and are overwhelmingly genuine refugees.
 - Anyone **genuinely** concerned about illegal arrivals in Australia should focus on arrivals by air.