

Asylum seekers and offshore processing

Australia and asylum seekers arriving by boat

- Asylum seekers, including children, arriving by boat without a valid visa from 13 August 2012 may be transferred to Regional Processing Centres in Nauru or Manus Island (PNG).
- The Government's 'No Advantage' policy means that those who attempt to reach Australia by boat will have to wait for the same period of time they would have waited for resettlement had they stayed where they were. No-one can work out how long this will be but the Government has indicated it could be more than 5 years.
- Detention conditions on both Manus Island and Nauru are unsuitable for asylum seekers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has recommended that the centres be closed.

Why is this an election issue?

- The politicisation of asylum seekers has continued unabated over the last 3 years – extremely vulnerable people fleeing persecution, including children, are being used to score political points about 'stopping the boats'.
- There is a bipartisan commitment to offshore processing in the name of 'stopping the boats' but the boats continue to come.
- Increasing numbers of adults and children on Manus Island and Nauru are being traumatised by their situation and committing serious acts of self-harm.

Ask your candidates

- Will you work within your party for more just and humane policies, including an end to the 'no advantage' principle?
- In government, how long will your party leave children on Manus Island?
- What policies will your party put in place to work collaboratively in the region to improve the conditions for asylum seekers in Indonesia and Malaysia and other places so that they do not have to seek refuge by engaging people smugglers?

Fast Facts

- In 2012, 15,800 claims were lodged in Australia and 83,400 in the United States.
- About 80% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries – including 1.7 million people in Pakistan
- Over 90% of asylum seekers who have recently arrived in Australia by boat are found to be refugees and granted permanent protection visas.

The Uniting Church joins with Amnesty in calling for the closure of the centre at Nauru and the immediate return of all asylum seekers. The report confirms our worst fears that the current policies do nothing more than punish and abuse these vulnerable people for seeking asylum.

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, Media Statement, 23 November 2012

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