

Friday 17 February 2012

I refer to today's article regarding asylum seekers ("Asylum seekers made to feel at home thanks to \$10,000 welcome package"). It is critical that we get some perspective here. Let's have a look at the facts:

- Asylum seekers represent just 2.0% of Australia's annual migration intake;
- In 2010, 8 250 people claimed asylum in Australia in 2010 - this accounts for a mere 1.04% of the global total;
- Most asylum seekers arrive in Australia by air - from 2001- 2010, boat arrivals accounted for less than a quarter of Australia's total asylum claims;
- Most people seeking asylum who arrive by boat are assessed as being refugees. Most people seeking asylum who arrive by air are not;
- Other countries are doing far more for these people - In 2009 the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland, with a combined population of 25 million (roughly equivalent to Australia's 22.5 million) received and processed 51, 120 asylum claims. Australia received and processed 6 500.
- Community detention costs the tax payer much less than detention centres - the contract with the private operator of the detention centre is worth \$1 billion over four years.

It's a basic human urge to flee threatening conditions to secure the safety of your family and a basic human right to seek asylum.

Jesuit Social Services (in partnership with MacKillop Family Services and CatholicCare) is one of a number of community organisations providing accommodation and support to children and young people who have been transferred into community detention. These children - in isolation from their families - have fled the most intolerable conditions, conditions on a scale that many of us will never see in a lifetime: war, famine, political chaos and sexual and physical abuse, including torture. Surely, they deserve to be treated humanely.

Julie Edwards  
CEO Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services is a not-for-profit organisation which works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.

Catherine Neville 0407 318 832

Julie Edwards, CEO 0418 163 539