

REFUGEE FACTS

FACT 1

An **ASYLUM SEEKER** is someone seeking protection whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.



Asylum seekers arrive in Australia by boat or plane and ask for protection. The government then processes their claims and if they are found to be refugees they are granted a visa.

FACT 2

A **REFUGEE** is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence.



Over 90 per cent of asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat are assessed to be refugees fleeing persecution.

FACT 3

It is **NOT ILLEGAL** to seek asylum in Australia, even if arriving by boat.



The right to seek asylum is recognised under Australian (1958 Migration Act) and international law.

FACT 4

There is **NO QUEUE**.



For people who need protection, seeking asylum in another country is their only choice. Resettlement through the UN ('the queue') is only available for a very small group. In 2012, there were 15.4 million refugees worldwide and 88,600 of those were resettled; only 0.6%.

FACT 5

Asylum seekers arriving by boat make up **LESS THAN 8%** of Australia's annual immigration.



Every year, the number of asylum seekers who arrive by boat is tiny compared to our overall migration.

FACT 6

In Australia there are **1.3 REFUGEES** for every **1,000 PEOPLE**.



Over the years, Australia has helped to protect thousands of refugees from all over the world. However, this group of people still make up a very small portion of the Australian population.

FACT 7

ASYLUM SEEKERS 2012
(UNHCR Global trends 2012)



Australia receives a very **SMALL** number of asylum seekers by international standards.

FACT 8

An asylum seeker in the community

\$505.40

Aged pensioner

\$808.40

Asylum seekers on Bridging Visas in the community get Centrelink equivalent to 89% of the unemployment benefit, which covers their rent, bills, food, transport and all other costs.



REFUGEE MYTHS

MYTH: Asylum seekers who arrive by boat are illegal

It is legal to seek asylum in Australia, even if you arrive on a boat without a visa. Seeking asylum is a legal right guaranteed under Australian and international law. It is illegal for governments to punish asylum seekers for arriving by boat.

MYTH: Offshore processing will deter people getting on boats

People who get on boats often know the risks but feel they have no choice because of the terrible danger they face where they are. If we really want to 'stop the boats', we would make refugees' lives safer in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, instead of further punishing people who arrive on our shores fleeing terror and violence.

MYTH: Asylum seekers are just after a better job

Nearly all asylum seekers who arrive by boat are found to be refugees fleeing persecution, war and violence. The definition of a refugee is internationally agreed and a low economic status is not grounds for being recognised as a refugee.

MYTH: If all they want is protection, they could stay in Indonesia/Malaysia

Most asylum seekers do stay in countries like Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, but these places do not protect asylum seekers or refugees and some are forced to flee further afield. Even then, most asylum seekers head for Europe and America, but a few thousand do make their way to Australia because we have promised to protect refugees.

MYTH: Asylum seekers come here because the government has taken a soft approach

Australia's treatment of asylum seekers remains very tough by international standards. Nearly all the boat arrivals in recent years have been people from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran – countries where human rights abuses are widespread. Asylum seeker arrival numbers follow regional and global trends – no policy of deterrence is going to change the fact that people are fleeing for their lives.

MYTH: If asylum seekers can afford to get here, they don't need protection

On average, it costs \$5,000–20,000 to seek asylum in Australia. Many asylum seekers are not wealthy, but borrow money from relatives and/or sell land and possessions to make the journey to safety.

MYTH: Supporting asylum seekers means supporting people smuggling

People smugglers may be breaking the law, but asylum seekers are not. It is inhumane and against the law to punish asylum seekers escaping war and terror in order to send a message to people smugglers. To stop people smuggling, we need to stop the reasons that people flee their countries – violence, terror and persecution.

MYTH: Charity begins at home, let's help our poor and homeless first.

Australia spends billions on detention and offshore processing. This could happen in the community, for a fraction of the cost.

MYTH: Asylum seekers should get help from the UN in their country

It is often very difficult, and even impossible, for asylum seekers to get help from the UN. Often they don't even know the UN exists, or it is too dangerous to go to the city where the UN office is. Even if they are able to contact the UN and get UN refugee status, there is often very little the UN can do to help them find safety.

MYTH: Asylum seekers destroy their identity documents to get refugee status

When escaping oppressive governments or sudden violence, it is often impossible to bring a passport, or these documents are lost or stolen during the long journey to safety. But governments can and should assess asylum claims and protect refugees, even without identity documents.

MYTH: Boat people are potential terrorists and pose a security risk to Australia.

No asylum seekers who have arrived by boat have been found to be terrorists. All asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat must pass security checks before being granted protection. If a person is found to have committed a serious crime they are not given refugee status.