

# myths FACTS + solutions



## **MYTH** ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

> **FACT** Asylum seekers are neither illegal nor are they immigrants. Immigrants leave by choice and can return at any time. Asylum seekers are forced to leave and cannot return for fear of persecution—such as torture, imprisonment and execution.

> **FACT** As a signatory to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Australia must provide protection to people fleeing persecution, regardless of whether they arrive by air or by sea.<sup>1</sup>

> **FACT** There is no Australian law that criminalises the act of arriving in Australia without a valid visa for the purposes of seeking asylum.<sup>2</sup>



## **MYTH** ASYLUM SEEKERS SHOULD WAIT THEIR TURN IN THE QUEUE

> **FACT** There is no queue or processing system accessible to asylum seekers in their home countries. By definition, to be considered a refugee you must be outside your country of origin.<sup>3</sup>

> **FACT** Very few countries in our region are signatories to the Refugee Convention. Asylum seekers who arrive in countries that have not signed the convention, such as Malaysia or Indonesia, are subject to anything from neglect to abuse, torture and indefinite imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

> **FACT** By the end of 2012 there were 45.2 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. 893,700 of these people have applied for asylum. Of this number, the UNHCR has submitted 74,800 for resettlement, or 0.17% of all forcibly displaced people worldwide. Currently there are no durable solutions for the vast majority of asylum seekers.<sup>5</sup>

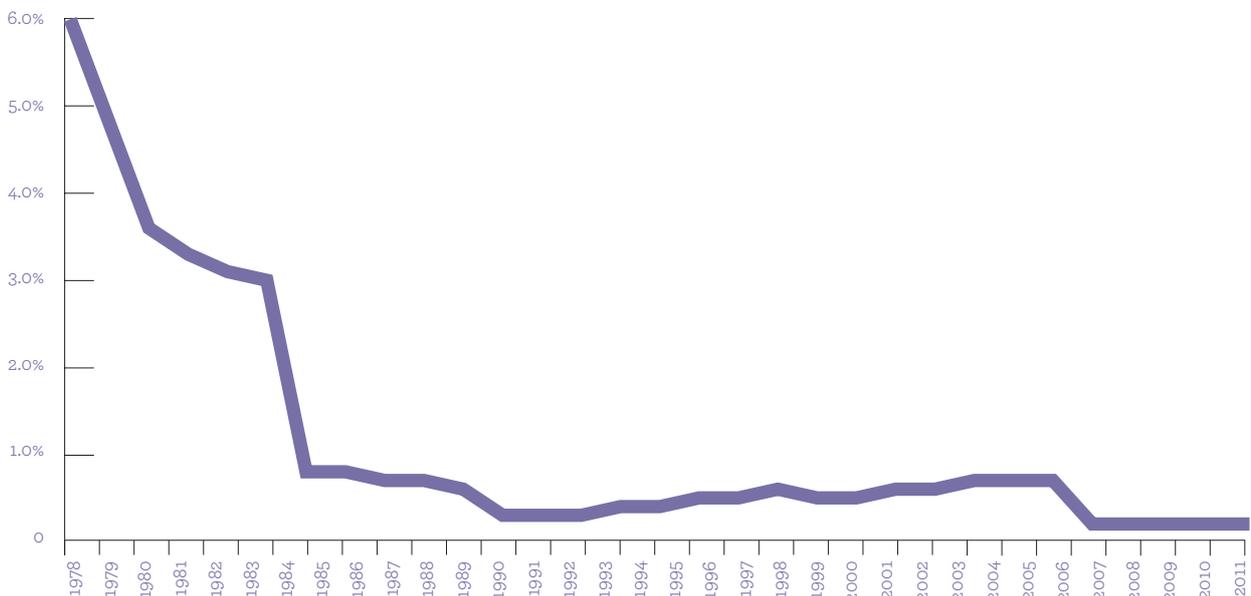


## **MYTH MORE PEOPLE ARE SEEKING ASYLUM BY BOAT BECAUSE THE LABOR PARTY IS SOFT ON ASYLUM SEEKERS**

> **FACT** The Rudd government's 'Regional Resettlement Arrangement' with Papua New Guinea marks the harshest (yet ineffective) shift in immigration policy we have seen under a Labor government. Even under the Gillard government, refugees made up 6.6% of Australia's total immigration, whereas it was 7.6% during the Howard era.<sup>6</sup>

> **FACT** The number of boat arrivals depends not so much on domestic policy as 'push' factors in countries of origin such as repression, discrimination, ethnic conflict, human rights abuses and civil war. As forced-migration expert Dr Khalid Koser has noted: 'There is wide consensus among both scholars and refugee organisations that conditions in origin countries... tend to be more important than conditions in destination countries... in explaining the movement of refugees.'<sup>7</sup>

% World Refugees Hosted By Australia



## MYTH AUSTRALIA IS BEING FLOODED BY ASYLUM SEEKERS

> **FACT** In 2012 poor countries received over 80% of the world's refugees (2.4million). Pakistan was host to the largest number of refugees worldwide (1.6 million), followed Iran (868,200). Australia has 30,000, or 0.3% of the global total.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 1: Cohort of IMA's who arrived in 2011-12

Status of IMA's who arrived in 2011-2012 as at end March 2013

Citizenship	Number of IMSa	Primary Grants	Primary refusals	Primary Grant Rate	Final Grants	Final Refusals (POST REVIEW OUTCOME)	Finally determined GRANT RATE	% of IMA's finalised
Afghanistan	3363	2223	598	78.8%	2469	65	97.4%	75.3%
Iran	1401	711	441	61.7%	921	115	88.9%	73.9%
Iraq	360	193	89	68.4%	233	26	90%	71.9%
Pakistan	727	388	142	73.2%	456	19	96%	65.3%
Sri Lanka	1356	55	568	8.8%	61	78	43.9%	10.3%
Stateless	622	340	121	73.8%	413	20	95.4%	69.6%
Other	214	101	13	88.6%	107	4	96.4%	51.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8043</b>	<b>4011</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>4660</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>93.4%</b>	<b>62%</b>

Source: DIAC Systems

Figure 2: Cohort of IMA's who arrived in 2010-11

Status of IMA's who arrived in 2010-2011 as at end March 2013

Citizenship	Number of IMSa	Primary Grants	Primary refusals	Primary Grant Rate	Final Grants	Final Refusals (POST REVIEW OUTCOME)	Finally determined GRANT RATE	% of IMA's finalised
Afghanistan	1307	766	537	58.8%	1251	30	97.7%	98%
Iran	1637	764	864	46.9%	1369	185	88.1%	94.9%
Iraq	474	252	215	54%	406	49	89.2%	96%
Pakistan	67	38	29	56.7%	60	6	90.9%	98.5%
Sri Lanka	243	92	123	42.8%	137	26	84%	67.1%
Stateless	736	377	375	50.1%	653	61	91.5%	97%
Other	368	111	99	52.9%	142	47	75.1%	51.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4665</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>2242</b>	<b>51.7%</b>	<b>4018</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>90.9%</b>	<b>91.5%</b>

Source: DIAC Systems

Figure 3: Overturn rate by country of citizenship

Citizenship	2010-11	2011-12	Jun Qtr 2011-12	Mar Qtr 2012-13
Afghanistan	87.1%	90.1%	87.4%	86.5%
Iran	78.7%	79.2%	79.7%	58.2%
Iraq	75.0%	75.4%	69.2%	71.4%
Pakistan	83.3%	72.0%	77.8%	80.4%
Sri Lanka	69.7%	81.6%	72.1%	47.2%
Stateless	84.0%	82.3%	81.4%	72.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>82.4%</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>72.3%</b>

## MYTH AUSTRALIA TAKES ITS FAIR SHARE OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEE

> **FACT** Of the 10.55 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate in 2012, Australia hosted 30,083 (0.29%). We also received just 1.47% of total asylum applications worldwide. The largest numbers of refugees reside in poorer countries such as Pakistan (1,638,456), Iran (868,452) and Kenya (564,933).<sup>10</sup>

> **FACT** More than 80% of the world's refugees live in developing nations. Australia ranks 49th in the world for the number of refugees it hosts, and 62nd relative to its population size. Based on wealth per capita, that rank drops to 87th.<sup>11</sup>

## How Australia Compares (Refugees)

### Australia's World Ranking (2012)

By total number of refugees	49th
Compared to our population size (per capita)	62nd
Compared to our national wealth GDP (PPP) per capita	87th

### Australia's Ranking of 44 Industrialised Countries (2012)

Compared to Australia's population size (per capita)	15st
Compared to Australia's national wealth GDP (PPP)	14th

Category	Global Total	Australia Total	Australia's Share and Rank
Refugees under UNHCR mandate	10,500,241	30,083	0.29% (49th)
Refugees resettled from other countries	88,600	5,900	6.66% (3rd)

## How Australia Compares (Asylum Seekers)

### Australia's World Ranking (2012)

By total number of asylum claims	20th
Compared to our population size (per capita)	29th
Compared to our national wealth GDP (PPP) per capita	52nd

### Australia's Ranking of 44 Industrialised Countries (2012)

By total number of asylum claims	12th
Compared to our population size (per capita)	16th
Compared to our national wealth GDP (PPP) per capita	14th

Category	Global Total	Australia Total	Australia's Share and Rank
Asylum applications received in 2011	1,669,725	15,441	0.92% (23rd)
Asylum seekers recognised as refugees in 2011	1,018,719	5,726	0.56% (24th)

## Statistics at a glance

### 45.2 million people displaced, as at 31 December 2012

Refugees	15.4 million
Asylum Seekers	893,700
Internall displaced persons	28.8 million

## MYTH ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE A DRAIN ON CENTRELINK AND PUBLIC HOUSING

> **FACT** Asylum seekers have no access to Centrelink benefits. A limited number of asylum seekers have access to the Red Cross Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme for a certain period of time. The income provided by this scheme is equal to 89% of the Newstart Allowance.<sup>12</sup>

> **FACT** Asylum seekers do not get access to public housing and very rarely gain access to transitional housing. Asylum seekers face significantly higher rates of homelessness than the national average.

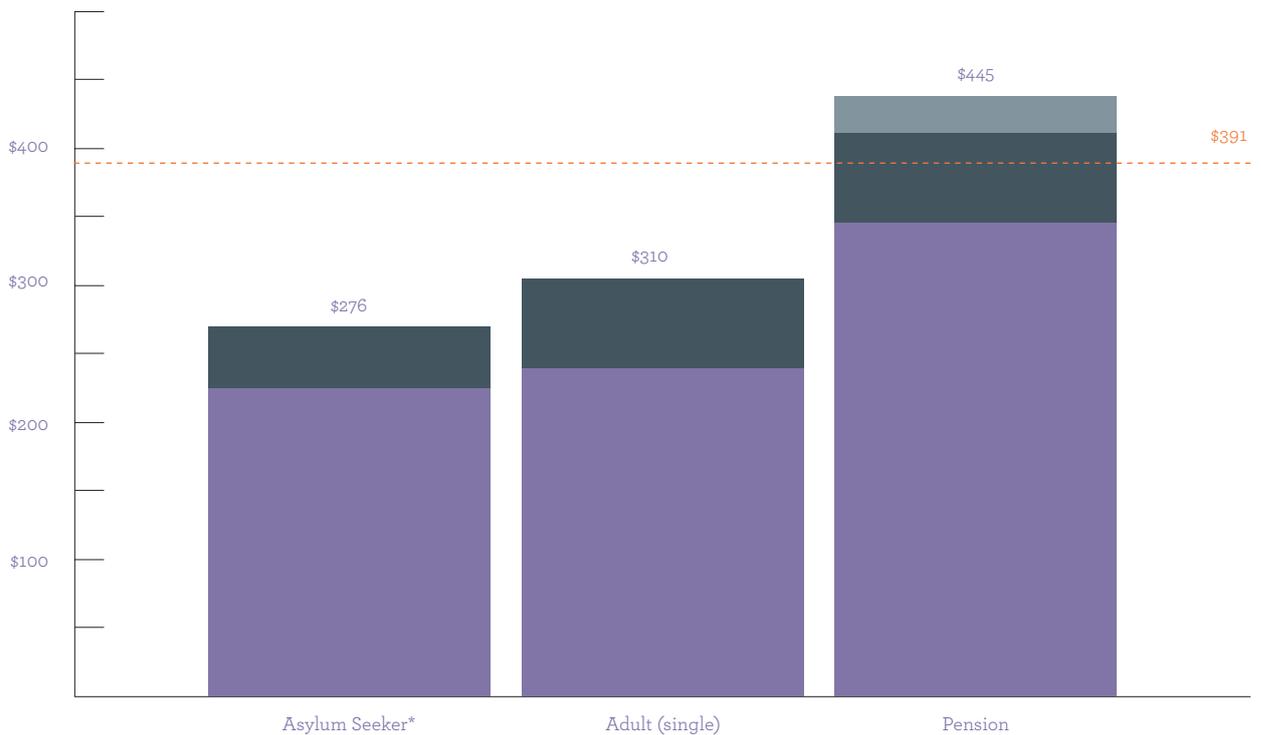


Figure 7: Australian Welfare Entitlements vs Community-based Asylum Seeker Assistance (per week)

- Income Support
- Rent Assistance
- Additional Income Support
- Poverty Line\*\*



## **MYTH** WE NEED DETENTION CENTRES

> **FACT** Between 1948 and 1992, Australia successfully and peacefully resettled 452 000 refugees. At this time, asylum seekers were processed in the community and there was no policy of mandatory detention.

> **FACT** Australia is unique in the world in its policy of mandatory and indefinite detention. There is a more humane alternative.<sup>13</sup> At approximately 10% of the cost, and without the mental and physical damage, all asylum seekers who arrive by boat can be processed and cared for in the community, just as the majority of plane arrivals are.

> **FACT** There is now a large body of medical evidence demonstrating that prolonged detention has severe detrimental effects on psychological and physical health.<sup>14</sup> There have been six deaths in 2010-11, five by suicide, in Australia's detention centres. The Ombudsman reports that more than 1100 incidents of threatened or actual self-harm occurred across all places of detention in 2010-11.<sup>15</sup>



## **MYTH AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO PROTECT OUR BORDERS FROM ASYLUM SEEKERS**

> **FACT** No boat arrival who may have been a potential threat to national security has ever gained entry into Australia. Boat arrivals are subject to the most rigorous security checks of all arrivals into Australia.

> **FACT** The vast majority of asylum seekers arrive by plane with a valid visa, applying for asylum at a later date while living in the community. None have ever posed a threat to Australia's national security.



1. UNHCR, Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>
2. Janet Phillips, 'Asylum seekers and refugees: what are the facts?' Parliamentary Library of Australia, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/sp/AsylumFacts.pdf>, 22 July 2011, p. 3.
3. UNHCR, Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, p. 14
4. Amnesty International, 'Malaysia: Abused and Abandoned: Refugees Denied Rights in Malaysia,' <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA28/010/2010/en>, 15 June 2010. Jessie Taylor, 'Behind Closed Doors: Examining the Conditions of Detention of Asylum Seekers in Indonesia,' *Castan Centre for Human Rights Law*, <http://www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/news/behind-australian-doors-report.pdf>, 3 November, 2009.
5. UNHCR Global Trends 2012 <http://www.unhcr.org/51bacbf9.html>
6. Refugee Council of Australia, Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program 2010-11, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/Intake%20Sub%202010-11.pdf>, February 2010, p. 2
7. Khalid Koser, 'Responding to Boat Arrivals in Australia: Time for a Reality Check,' *Lowy Institute for International Policy*, December 2010, p. 6.
8. Parliamentary Library of Australia, 'Boat Arrivals in Australia since 1976,' <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/sp/BoatArrivals.htm>, updated 15 July 2011.
9. ASRC, 'Australia vs the World,' [http://www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/how-we-compare-internationally\\_.pdf](http://www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/how-we-compare-internationally_.pdf), June 2011.
10. Refugee Council Global Refugee Statistics <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/stat-int.php>
11. For statistics and global rankings on refugees see, UNHCR (2012) Global Trends Annexes (Excel Tables), June 2013 <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends/2012-GlobalTrends-annex-tables.zip>
12. Department of Immigration and Citizenship, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/letters/letters09/le091022.htm> 21 October 2009.
13. Alternatives to Offshore Processing <http://www.palmerhiggsbooks.com.au/catalog-product-view-id-658-s-alternatives-to-offshore-processing.html> 2012
14. Phillips C (2009) 'Immigration detention and health,' *Medical Journal of Australia* 192(2): 61-67.
15. Ombudsman Report - Suicide and Self-harm in the Immigration Detention Network [http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/suicide\\_and\\_self-harm\\_in\\_the\\_immigration\\_detention\\_network.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/suicide_and_self-harm_in_the_immigration_detention_network.pdf) May 2013).