



MEDIA RELEASE

RETALIATION FOR DISALLOWANCE OF TPVs A DISGRACE

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre condemns the Australian Government's actions to freeze the processing of protection applications and repeal complementary protection

Following the successful disallowance motion blocking TPVs, the Coalition government has launched an unprecedented attack on the rights of asylum seekers.

The government readily admits the decision to cap arrivals at current levels, thereby freezing all processing of refugee claims, is retaliation for Labor and the Greens blocking the reintroduction of TPVs.

CEO of the Asylum Seeker Resources Centre (ASRC), Kon Karapanagiotidis states, "This political posturing effectively denies all people who arrive in Australia, whether by air or by sea, the right to seek asylum. The Coalition government is using bullying tactics to coerce Labor and the Greens to allow TPVs to return and they are using the lives of asylum seekers as the bargaining chip. It is both irresponsible and unfair.

This directive reveals that it is not about saving lives at sea, as it has stopped the processing of all protection applications, regardless of arrival."

The impact of the directive to halt processing of protection visa applications will see over 33, 000 people who have fled persecution endure uncertainty, despite the fact history demonstrates most will be deemed in need of permanent protection. Of the 11, 206 refugees previously granted TPVs, over 96% were later granted permanent residency.

Forcing refugees to unnecessarily endure uncertainty and family separation is cruel and unjust. It seriously deteriorates mental health and fails to value the incredible contribution of refugees to Australian society.

Pamela Curr, Detention Rights Advocate at the ASRC explains, "The Government continues to claim that the reintroduction of TPVs is to prevent boat arrivals. This is completely dishonest. TPVs are directly responsible for causing the largest loss of life at sea in Australian maritime history."

In 2001, 288 of the 353 people aboard the SIEV X who drowned, primarily women and children, were family members of refugees on TPVs.

The ASRC is also concerned at the introduction of the *Migration Amendment (Regaining Control of Australia's Protection Obligations) Bill*, as it dismantles the protection afforded to people at risk of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, such as women fleeing female genital mutilation or honor killings. The Bill seeks to concentrate even more decision making power with the Minister personally, rather than through a transparent and consistent protection application process.

The Bill serves to further diminish Australia's commitment to our human rights and non-refoulement obligations. The impact of referring decision making power back to the Minister is to delay decisions for women fleeing serious forms of harm. Complementary Protection was

introduced to ensure women had equal access to protection and were not subjected to a slow and unaccountable Ministerial process.

“It is emblematic of the government’s attitude to refugees and asylum seekers that they would seek to deny protection to people suffering these gross forms of abuse. The government is making Australia a country of No Resort for those fleeing for their lives. Australia, the richest, most stable country in a region of human rights abuse, has declared war on asylum seekers and with this we risk becoming a pariah nation,” says Pamela Curr.

The ASRC will continue to campaign on the dangers of the TPV and their ineffectiveness as a deterrent. We encourage Labor and the Greens to remain steadfast in blocking TPVs.

We call on the government to accept the decision of the Senate and immediately begin processing protection visa applications for all asylum seekers.

We are committed to ensuring that women fleeing gender based violence are afforded protection through a fair and transparent process and not through politicized decision making.

“We must remain vigilant and undeterred from the task of protecting asylum seekers fleeing persecution. This swift and cruel action by the government is alarming and unjust and it must be challenged,” says Kon.

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