



**MEDIA RELEASE - EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 DECEMBER 2013**

## **ASRC PLEDGES A FAIR GO FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY WITH THE OPENING OF A NEW CENTRE**

**The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre pledges its ongoing commitment to asylum seekers as the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights marks its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on *Human Rights Day*.**

Kon Karapanagiotidis, CEO of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) says, "Today, on *Human Rights Day*, we take this opportunity to stand up and pledge our commitment to championing the human rights of all people who seek asylum on Australia's shores.

Today, we also take the opportunity to remind people that seeking asylum is a humanitarian issue, not a political one." The actions of the government in the last week in particular, show a lack of leadership and respect for the dignity and rights of asylum seekers," says Kon.

Following the Senate blocking the reintroduction of temporary protections visas, the government retaliated with halting the processing of all protection applications, leaving 33, 000 people in limbo to endure uncertainty, family separation and no right to work.

"As an independent organisation, we fight fearlessly for the human rights of asylum seekers. We do this through our advocacy and direct services, including housing, employment and training. In the current environment, these services are needed more than ever," he said.

On *Human Rights Day*, the ASRC will officially open the doors of its second and newest location in Dandenong, Victoria.

"Refugees contribute greatly to our economy and community," says Gavin Ackerly, ASRC's Director of Empowerment.

"The right to work is pivotal to human dignity. There are asylum seekers willing and able to contribute. This centre is our pledge of a fair go for asylum seekers. Our members participate in English classes, job seeking skills and employment services," states Gavin.

The official opening of the ASRC's Dandenong Centre will take place 12.30 PM – 1.30 PM at 179 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Kon Karapanagiotidis 0405 003 473**

**Serina McDuff 0451 411 479**

[www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au)